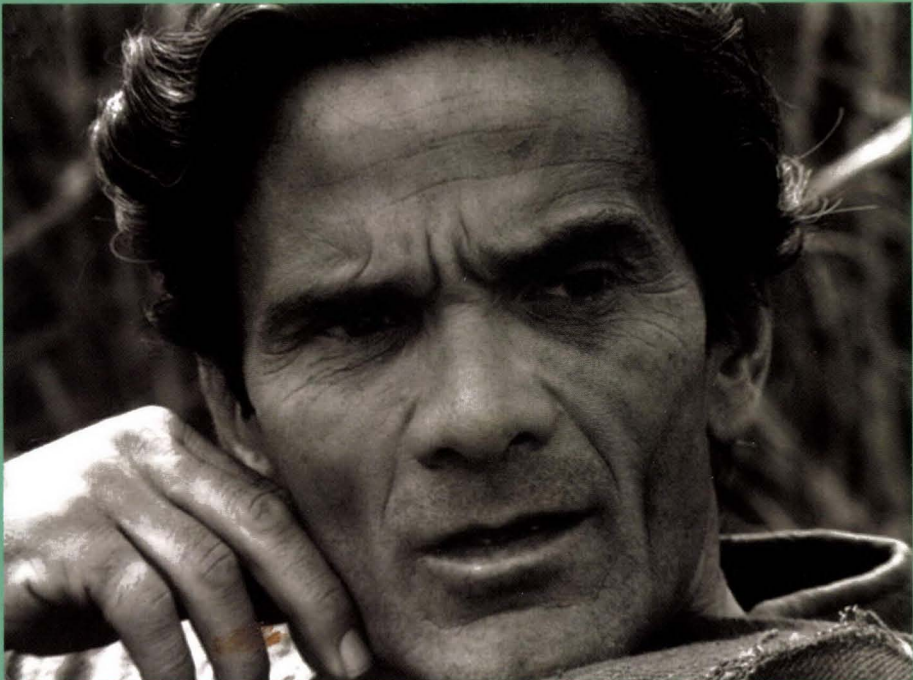


Pier Paolo Pasolini

Heretical Empiricism

Translated by Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett

With Pasolini's "Repudiation of the Trilogy of Life"
translated and introduced by Ben Lawton



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**TRANSLATED BY BEN LAWTON
AND LOUISE K. BARNETT**

EDITED BY LOUISE K. BARNETT

**WITH PASOLINI'S "REPUDIATION OF THE TRILOGY OF LIFE"
TRANSLATED AND INTRODUCED BY BEN LAWTON**



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WHY ADD “REPUDIATION OF THE TRILOGY OF LIFE”
to the 2005 edition of Pasolini’s *Heretical Empiricism*?

Ben Lawton

Quite simply because Pasolini is dead and “Repudiation,” along with his last film, *Salò*, and his posthumous novel, *Petrolio*, like it or not, are the closing sequences of the artist’s tumultuous existence and thus determine to a large extent the montage we make of his life. Pasolini wrote:

It is therefore absolutely necessary to die, *because so long as we live, we have no meaning*, and the language of our lives (with which we express ourselves, and to which we therefore attribute the greatest importance) is untranslatable, a chaos of possibilities, a search for relations and meanings without resolution. *Death effects an instantaneous montage of our lives*; that is, it chooses the truly meaningful moments (which are no longer modifiable by other possible contrary or incoherent moments) puts them in a sequence, transforming an infinite, unstable and uncertain—and therefore linguistically not describable—present into a clear, stable, certain, and therefore easily describable past (exactly in the context of a General Semiology). *It is only thanks to death that our life serves us to express ourselves* (All italics in the original; *Heretical Empiricism*, 236-37).

Pasolini is dead, brutally murdered sometime during the night of November 2, 1975, by Pino Pelosi, a 17-year-old two-bit punk, and several unidentified associates. The murder was particularly brutal. Pasolini was beaten viciously with a nail-studded board and then run over repeatedly with his own Alfa Romeo. The event galvanized Italian society to an extent almost incomprehensible in this country. If Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, Gore Vidal, Camille Paglia, Madonna, Martin Scorsese, Spike Lee, Michael Moore, and Noam Chomsky were rolled up into a single person, one might begin to get some idea of the impact Pasolini had on Italian

society. The controversies he initiated throughout his long, prolific career as poet, novelist, essayist, dramatist, and filmmaker still rage. His death had an impact in Italy comparable to that of John F. Kennedy in the United States. Every intellectual, reporter and politician in Italy had a theory about the causes of the murder and about who the guilty parties were. The only thing everyone agreed upon—including the prosecutor—was that Pelosi, alone, could never have killed Pasolini. Although the poet was a smallish man in his early fifties, he was exceptionally fit and tough. Some argued that his death was, somehow, an inescapable final and fitting climax to his life. In his own words, it would finally permit a montage of his life. Pasolini, they said, had described analogous murders in his novels and shown them in his films. He lived dangerously. He prowled the slums of major metropolitan centers around the world, alone, in search of juvenile male sexual companionship, which at best could be described as rough trade. Others argued that his death was a *de facto* suicide; that, after the complete pessimism of *Salò*, confronted with a society which he described as personally suicidal, he had gone off in search of death ("Repudiation of the Trilogy of Life," xvii). Others still, Laura Betti preeminent among them, argued that he was killed by the ruling Italian political party, the Christian Democrats. Pasolini himself argues in several essays that it is in fact the established power, the state, the church, the educational system, and television, which are responsible for the pandemic violence that has come to be characteristic of Italian cities, and thus, we may presumably extrapolate, for his own death.

Amidst all the debates, accusations, and counter accusation, all the major players appear to have shared one emotion: relief. Pasolini was finally dead. He was no longer an ongoing embarrassment. Finally they could all, in their different ways, deal more easily with the *scrittore scomodo*. Literally, *scrittore scomodo* means, uncomfortable writer, but what the expression really means is the writer who makes others feel uncomfortable, who inconveniences others, who makes them feel awkward—those others being the power structures, right and left, young and old, male chauvinist and feminist, etc. Pasolini eventually spelled out his poetics—which he applied to everything he did—in a 1970 article titled "The Unpopular Cinema" (*Heretical Empiricism*, 267-275). In it Pasolini argues that art is valid only when it is revolutionary, that is, when the artist is on the firing line, breaking the laws of the system within which he operates. Thus, in his filmmaking, he rejected both traditional and avant-garde cinemas—

the former because its extreme readability does not force the viewer to reflect on what he has seen; the latter because avant-garde filmmakers have, in his opinion, charged beyond the firing line and, in his words, have been trapped in a prisoner of war camp which they have promptly transformed into an intellectual ghetto. Both, he argued, are consumer products since neither challenges its respective public. Pasolini returned to the firing line by fusing traditional and modernist modes in his "trilogy of life" films: *Il Decamerone* (1971: *The Decameron*), *I racconti di Canterbury* (1972; *The Canterbury Tales*) and *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (1974; *Arabian Nights*). In the process, while acquiring a broader and more popular audience, he alienated the greater part of the intellectuals, critics, and art house patrons who has earlier championed his more esoteric works. At the same time he discovered how accurate he had been when he defined the revolutionary artistic process as sadomasochistic: sadistic in that it destroys the expectations of the public, masochistic because the public will reject the work and attack the artist. Lest it be thought that Pasolini was a complete pessimist, it should be noted that he did add that there is the liberated spectator who rejoices in the freedom of the artist.

Sadistically Pasolini attacked in all directions. Sadistically he was embroiled in endless polemics with everyone in Italy. Masochistically, he paid the price. He was tried 33 times for crimes as varied as armed robbery of a filling station—allegedly, according to his accuser he had a gold bullet in his gun (not guilty)—and contempt for the state religion as a result of the making of *La ricotta* (guilty-condemned to four months in jail, but the conviction was later overturned). Through it all, so far as I can ascertain, he apparently maintained an absolute openness, a childlike candor. He stated and wrote whatever he felt was right, in almost godlike disregard for all consequences. He attacked the government. He argued endlessly in essays which appeared regularly in major periodicals and in scholarly journals, that the contemporary Italian government was, in fact, a seamless continuation of the Mussolini's fascist government. He attacked the temporal power of the Catholic Church, arguing that by definition it was engaged in a connivance with the state, which corrupted both Church and state. He urged the Pope to sell or give away the Vatican and all its accumulated treasures, and to move into the slums with real people. How, he asked, could this possibly hurt the church? He attacked the PCI. Although not a party member since his expulsion in 1949, Pasolini described himself as a Marxist and he always voted for the Communist

Party. This did not, however, stop him from attacking the party for its cowardice, and for its compromises with the power structure. He attacked university students during the Age of Aquarius. In the aftermath of a confrontation between students and police, he chastised the revolting students who at the time were the darlings of intellectuals world-wide in what he himself described as "ugly verses" in "The PCI to the Young!!" (*Heretical Empiricism*, 150-54).

Pasolini is dead, but he has not been silenced. Thirty years after his murder he continues to speak to us from the grave with his final prophetic works. Over the years Pasolini attacked consumer capitalism with increasing acrimony. He decided that consumer capitalism was worse than fascism, for while the latter was openly oppressive, and thus offered something against which to struggle, consumer capitalism coopts its victims through an erosion of values which transforms them into willing participants in their own exploitation. He decided that capitalism must be brought to its knees. But how? The backbone of capitalism, he reasoned, is the traditional family, predicated on patriarchal values. Therefore, he reasoned, the best way to attack capitalism is to attack the family. But how do you destroy patriarchal family values? Sex, the more unconventional the better, became the answer for Pasolini (Lawton, 1992). He articulated these theories in *Teorema*, a film in which a mysterious figure visits the family of an Italian capitalist, and eventually seduces all the family members in turn: mother, daughter, son, father, and maid, with the results that might be expected: insanity verging on suicide, except for the maid who achieves a sort of primitive canonization. But then, in an essay which seemed to contradict his attack on patriarchal family values, he condemned abortion. He wrote: "I am traumatized by the legalization of abortion because I consider it, as do many, a legalization of homicide." His solution: concentrate not on abortion, but on the event which causes the need for abortion, heterosexual copulation. And why is copulation a problem? Because, he argued, unlike times past when survival depended on procreation, now survival depends on not procreating. Pasolini's answer to the problem of overpopulation was to promote sexual education everywhere and in particular on television: "contraceptives, pills, different sexual techniques, a modern morality of sexual honor, etc." He urged his readers to remember that in this new context "it is heterosexual relations that are dangerous for the human species, while homosexual ones represent its salvation." And in case the reader has a sneaking suspicion that Pasolini's advocacy

here is not completely disinterested, the author ends the essay with a brief paragraph which epitomizes his not infrequently ironic honesty: "Finally: many—lacking the virile (manly), rational capacity to understand—will accuse this essay of being personal, of pleading special minority interests. So what?" (Pasolini, 1975, 123-31).

In 1970, having rejected the increasingly ideological direction in which his work had been going, he began his "trilogy of life" films. Of these films, in an interview with Gideon Bachmann, Pasolini stated that "it is much more difficult to make films in which the ideology is hidden, indirect, implicit, than to make thesis films, defending a clear point of view. . . . I am concerned with the experience of entering into the most mysterious working of artistic creation . . . into the ontology of narration, into the making of cinema-cinema." He added, "I find it the most beautiful idea I have ever had, this wish to tell, to recount for the sheer joy of telling and recounting, for the creation of narrative myths, away from ideology, precisely because I have understood that to make an ideological film is finally easier than making a film outwardly lacking ideology. Outwardly, because every film has its ideology, first of all its intrinsic truth to itself, its poetry, and then its external ideology, which is its more or less self-evident political attitude." With the films of the "trilogy of life" Pasolini proceeded from a focus on the artistic process in the *Decameron* ("why realize a work of art when it is so nice to simply dream it?") to an expression of the "sheer joy of telling and recounting" ("here ends *The Tales of Canterbury* told solely for the pleasure of telling"), to a final acknowledgement in *Arabian Nights*, that the creative process, however painful, does generate enduring rewards ("What a night! God has created none to equal it. Its inception was bitter, but how sweet its end"). In these films, however, we can also observe the increasingly obvious destruction of many of Pasolini's most cherished myths. The childlike innocence, which Pasolini had once found so endearing in Ninetto Davoli and in the sub proletariat in general, comes under increasingly harsh attacks. Pasolini's view of casual sex in general and of homosexuality in particular also becomes progressively more negative—as a metaphor for the human condition, not necessarily per se (Lawton, 1981).

In the "trilogy of life" films sex continues to be the objective correlative for Pasolini's hidden ideology. It is both intended as a slap in the face of family values and to make very specific comments about the endless exploitation

of the poor, regardless of gender. At the same time he was deeply disturbed by the failure of both public and critics to understand his hidden ideology. Essentially, his films were perceived by many as mere pornography, and in fact they generated numerous imitations which he considered to be anything but the highest form of flattery. His response was *Salò*. Once again sex is the metaphor for exploitation, but here everyone, regardless of class or wealth is a potential victim; here sexual activities are depicted in a manner which is so grotesque, so dehumanizing, so brutalizing that they simply cannot become a consumer product. The four "lords," the authority figures, represent all the powers of the state: the duke (nobility), the monsignor (church), the president of the court of appeals (judiciary), and president Durcet (economic). Young working class conscripts are compelled to aid the "lords" in their torture, dehumanization, and eventual murder of young men and women. These scenes are so horrific that of the several hundred people who attended the U.S. premiere at Indiana University in the late 1970s, only a handful was able to remain until the end. And yet, we have seen similar images emerge from Abu Grahیب prison, and we have been told that there are many more that are so horrendous that we cannot be allowed to see them. This notwithstanding, only a few working class soldiers have been prosecuted. Not one of the contemporary "lords" has been even so much as reprimanded. How far does the fascist continuum extend?

Pasolini's last essays are profoundly pessimistic. In "Repudiation," he might as well be speaking about this country, particularly in the light of events following hurricane Katrina's destruction of New Orleans, when he writes,

My critics . . . seem to think that Italian society has unquestionably improved, that is, that it has become more democratic, more tolerant, more modern, etc. They do not notice the avalanche of crimes that submerges Italy: they relegate this phenomenon to the news media and remove all significance from it. They do not notice that there is no break between those who are technically criminal and those who are not; and that the model of insolence, inhumanity, ruthlessness is identical for the entire mass of young people. They do not notice that in Italy there actually is a curfew, that the night is as deserted and sinister as it was in the darkest centuries of the past; but they don't experience this, they stay

home (perhaps to gratify their consciences with modernity aided by television) ("Repudiation," xix)

The solutions he proposed, which he says apply only to Italy, are typically both absolutely outrageous and yet eminently sensible:

1. Eliminate public education beyond the fifth grade
2. Eliminate television.

The first solution, as I said, is clearly outrageous and deserves to be jettisoned along with the idea of school vouchers—another scheme intended to destroy public education and to further extend the already nearly universal segregation in major urban centers in this country. The second, instead, makes perfect sense. Without this soul-sucking, mind-destroying contraption neither Berlusconi nor Bush would be presidents of their respective countries and there might be some space for a serious discussion of very serious issues confronting the United States: the erosion of our civil liberties, the advisability of attempting to create a "new world order," the programmatic attack on all social services, the attempted destruction of Social Security, the jettisoning of pension plans by major corporations, and the lack of universal medical care, just to mention a few.

"What about oil?" you might well ask. Good question. Pasolini's post-humorous novel, *Petrolio* (1975), deals prophetically, precisely with this issue: petroleum as the hidden protagonist behind all the political and economic problems of Italy. This had already been the theme of Vittorio De Sica's and Cesare Zavattini's *Miracolo a Milano* (*Miracle in Milan*, 1951). In this film, in fact, we observe the capitalist, not coincidentally called Mobbi (the echo of Mobil Oil cannot be accidental, particularly since we see a Mobil Oil sign), who employs the army to expropriate poor squatters. As we watch those scenes we can't help but be reminded that the disastrous and illegal preemptive war against Iraq was not about weapons of mass destruction, nor about bringing liberty to the Iraqi people, but to control the second largest source of oil in the world. Why else did we start building 14 "enduring" military bases immediately?

Pasolini's death served to give his life a meaning which is becoming more important with each passing year. If he was significant when he was alive in Italy, if he continues to be significant three thousand miles away and 30 years later, it is because of his sadomasochistic attack against all forms

of political correctness—those hegemonic abominations which are most nefarious when they purport to defend our most cherished hopes, dreams, and aspirations. But of course, if you choose his path, if you choose to expose yourself time and again to the crossfire on the firing line, you are inevitably doomed because, if you will forgive the mixed metaphor, if your enemies don't crucify you, you will inevitably become a victim of so-called "friendly fire." And yet, without *poveri cristi* like Pasolini, there really is little hope for the future.

Ben Lawton, 2005

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REPUDIATION OF THE TRILOGY OF LIFE

Pier Paolo Pasolini

I think that, *before* [acting], one must never, in any case, fear being manipulated by the power of the establishment and its culture. One must behave as if this dangerous eventuality did not exist. What counts are first of all the sincerity and the necessity of what one has to say. One must not betray them in any way, least of all by remaining silent on principle.

But I also think that, *afterwards*, one must realize how much one has been manipulated, in any case, by the power structure. And then, if one's sincerity or necessity have been subjugated and manipulated, I think that one must have the courage to repudiate them.

I repudiate the *Trilogy of Life*, even though I do not repent having made it. I cannot, in fact, deny the sincerity and the necessity that drove me to the representation of bodies and their culminating symbol, the sexual organs.

This sincerity and necessity have several historical and ideological justifications.

First of all, they are part of the fight for the democratization of the "right to self-expression," and then for sexual liberalization, which were two fundamental moments of the progressive movement of the Fifties and Sixties.

In the second place, during the first phase of the cultural and anthropological crisis which began towards the end of the Sixties—in which the unreality of the subculture of the "mass media," and hence of mass communication, was beginning to triumph—the "innocent" bodies, with the archaic, dark, vital violence of their sexual organs, seemed to be the last bulwark of reality.

Finally, the representation of Eros, seen in a human environment barely surpassed by history, but still physically present (in Naples, in the Near East), was something that fascinated me personally, as individual author and as a man.

Now everything has turned upside down.

First: the progressive struggle for the democratization of self-

expression and for sexual liberation has been brutally surpassed and thwarted by the decision of the consumerist establishment to concede a vast (but false) tolerance.

Second: also the "reality" of the innocent bodies has been violated, manipulated, tampered with by the consumerist establishment; in fact, this violence on the bodies has become the most macroscopic element in the new human era.

Third: private sexual lives (such as mine) have undergone the trauma of both false tolerance and physical degradation, and that which in sexual fantasies was pain and joy, has become suicidal disappointment, shapeless sloth.

However, those who, annoyed or scornful, criticized the *Trilogy of Life*, should not think that my repudiation leads to their "duties."

My repudiation leads to something else. I am terrified of saying it; [therefore] before saying it, as is my real "duty," I search for delaying elements. They are:

a) The inviolable fact that, even if I wanted to continue making films such as those of the *Trilogy of Life*, I could not: because by now I hate the bodies and the sexual organs. Naturally, I am speaking of *these* bodies, of *these* sexual organs.

That is, of the bodies of the new Italian youths and boys, of the sexual organs of the new Italian youths and boys. Someone might object: "To tell the truth, in the *Trilogy* you did not represent contemporary bodies and sexual organs, but those of the past." It is true; but for a few years I have been able to deceive myself.

The degenerating present was compensated both by the objective survival of the past and, therefore, by the possibility of evoking it. But today the degeneration of the bodies and of the sexual organs has assumed a retroactive value.

If those who were *then* thus and so, have been able to become *now* thus and so, it means that they were potentially such already then; therefore, also their way of being *then* is devalued by the present.

The youths and boys of the Roman subproletariat—the ones I have projected in the old and resistant Naples, and later in the poor countries of the Third World—if *now* they are human garbage it means that potentially they were such also *then*; they were, therefore, imbeciles compelled to be adorable, squalid criminals compelled to be likeable rascals, vile good-for-nothings compelled to be saintly innocents, etc. The collapse of the

present implies the collapse of the past. Life is a pile of insignificant and ironic ruins.

b) My critics, annoyed or scornful, while all this was happening, had idiotic “duties,” as I was saying, to continue to impose: “duties” that concerned the fight for progress, improvement, liberalization, tolerance, collectivism, etc., etc. They did not notice that the degeneration occurred precisely through a falsification of their values.

And now they appear to be satisfied! They seem to think that Italian society has unquestionably improved, that is, that it has become more democratic, more tolerant, more modern, etc. They do not notice the avalanche of crimes that submerges Italy: they relegate this phenomenon to the news media and remove all significance from it.

They do not notice that there is no break between those who are technically criminal and those who are not; and that the model of insolence, inhumanity, ruthlessness is identical for the entire mass of young people.

They do not notice that in Italy there actually is a curfew, that the night is as deserted and sinister as it was in the darkest centuries of the past; but they don't experience this, they stay home (perhaps to gratify their consciences with modernity aided by television).

They don't notice that television, and perhaps even worse compulsory education, have degraded all the youths and boys into fussy, disturbed, racist second-class petty bourgeois; they consider this an unpleasant circumstance that will certainly resolve itself—as if an anthropological change were reversible.

They don't notice that sexual liberalization, rather than bringing lightness and happiness to youths and boys, has made them unhappy, closed, and consequently stupidly presumptuous and aggressive; but they absolutely refuse to deal with this because they care nothing for the youths and boys.

c) Outside of Italy, in the “developed” countries—especially in France—the die have long been cast; long ago, the masses¹ have ceased to exist anthropologically.

For the French bourgeois the masses are made up of Moroccans, or Greeks, or Portuguese, or Tunisians. All these poor folks need to do is to adopt the behavior of the French bourgeois as soon as possible.

This is what both the intellectuals on the right and the intellectuals on the left think, in exactly the same way.

In short, it is time to confront the problem: where will the repudiation of the *Trilogy* lead me?

It leads me to adaptation.

I am writing these pages on June 15, 1975, an election day.

I know that even if—as is very probable—there will be a victory of the left, the nominal value of the vote will be one thing, the real value something else. The first will demonstrate the unification of modernized Italy, in a positive sense; the second will demonstrate that Italy—except, naturally, for the traditional communists—is by now, as a whole, a depoliticized country, a dead body whose reflexes are purely mechanical.

Italy, in other words, is merely living a process of adaptation to its own degradation, from which it attempts to free itself only nominally.

Tout va bien: there are not in the country masses of young criminals, or neurotics, or insanelly conformist youths who are absolutely intolerant; the nights are safe and serene, marvelously Mediterranean; kidnappings, robberies, capital punishments, the millions of bag-snatchings and thefts concern only the news page of the papers, etc. Everyone has adapted, either by refusing to notice anything or by inertly rendering the news less dramatic.

But I have to admit that also having noticed, or having dramatized [the news], does not protect at all from adaptation or acceptance.

Therefore, I am adapting myself to the degradation and I am accepting the unacceptable. I am maneuvering to rearrange my life. I am forgetting how things were *before*. The beloved faces of yesterday are beginning to yellow. Before me—little by little, slowly, without further alternatives—looms the present. I readjust my commitment to a greater legibility (*Salò?*).

Translated by Ben Lawton, 2005.

From “Abiura,” in *Trilogia della vita*, Garzanti, 1995.

Translator’s note

¹ Pasolini uses the term “il popolo” for which there is no exact English-language equivalent. He is referring to subproletarians, peasants, and, perhaps, proletarians who have not been corrupted by bourgeois values.

Heretical Empiricism

TRANSLATORS' NOTE

In his remarks "To the Reader" Pasolini admits to writing the essays of *Heretical Empiricism* hurriedly on occasion and without revision, either for the "immediate consumption" of newspapers, journals, and conferences or as diary-like notes. He describes these pages as "particularly anguished, if for no other reason than that the 'desire for style'... came to me less during the course of these confused investigations."

Pasolini's own forthrightness confirms what the reader will find throughout the volume, that is, a concern for ideas not only at the expense of stylistic elegance, but often at the expense of simple clarity and logical progression as well—an ironic dimension of a work primarily devoted to literary language. Pursuing an idea, Pasolini will forget to end a sentence, or a paragraph. In the urgency of his need to capture a thought process he often sacrifices coherence, syntax, and style to an onrushing flow of ideas. There are repeated dislocations for emphasis, so that a Pasolinian sentence typically bristles with obstacles, the most formidable of which are the omnipresent and often lengthy parenthetical comments that reveal a habitual failure to integrate materials into the flow of the sentence proper. At times it is next to impossible to position the parenthetical utterance in such a way as to minimize its interruptiveness or its awkwardness. The generous use of quotation marks and italics, incomplete sentences, and individualistic punctuation all create additional obstacles quite apart from the complexities of Pasolini's argument.

As translators we have respected the style of the original as much as seems consistent with comprehension. With some exceptions for especially flagrant overloading or fragmentation Pasolini's idiosyncratic paragraphing is intact. We have similarly preserved his habit of beginning so many sentences in the same way—with a favorite expression like "in short" or "however"—and of ending with "etc." or even "etc., etc." Ellipses are all Pasolini's own, used for effect rather than omission, but punctuation within the sentence has been revised to conform to standard American practice. Beyond Pasolini's own liberal use of italics, we have italicized any word in Italian or in any other foreign language that it seemed desirable to keep in the original. Conversely, we have removed the italics from all of the appendices on the supposition that italicizing entire essays is a convention of the Italian printer rather than an expression of authorial emphasis.

Like his syntax, Pasolini's vocabulary involves some problems in English. Because Italian tends to use more abstract nouns than English does, and to make nouns out of adjectives where English does not, we have no ready equivalent for such key words as *imborghesimento*, the process of becoming middle class, or *epicità*, "epicness"—to take two random examples. A native speaker of English is apt to remark a certain ponderous quality at times, words like "particularity" and "particularistic," where in English "particular" would do. Such characteristic expressions are part of Pasolini's style, however, and have accordingly not been tampered with.

The Italian distinction between *cinema* as abstract system and *film* as specific work, which is not maintained in English, is kept throughout this volume to preserve the clarity of Pasolini's Saussurean dichotomy:

Cinema is similar to "*Langue*" while films correspond to "*Paroles*"; in a strictly Saussurean context this means that only Films (as only *Paroles*) exist in practice and concretely, while Cinema (as *Langue*) does not exist—it is simply an abstract and normalizing deduction which has its point of departure in infinite Films (understood as *Paroles*).

Wherever possible, however, the ponderous adjective "cinematographic" has been replaced with film; for example, "film industry" is used instead of "cinematographic industry," and "filmmaker" instead of "film author."

Also in the interest of fidelity to Pasolini's ideas, the words "bourgeois" and "petit bourgeois" are used throughout to translate *borghese* and *piccolo borghese*. These terms more accurately emphasize political connotations than do our customary "middle class" and "lower middle class."

Some of the terminology is simply the language of the European intellectual background that Pasolini brings to bear on his subject. Because of this generally unfamiliar and often vaguely presented frame of reference, the text has required a number of explanatory notes. Such notes are presented at the end of each essay. Pasolini's own notes, few in number, are given at the bottom of the page on which they occur, as they appear in the original. Brief editorial notes which also appear at the bottom of the page are so identified. Material in brackets within the text has been supplied by the translators unless otherwise indicated.

A Biographical Glossary is provided to identify briefly those nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers of the European intellectual tradition and other figures mentioned by Pasolini who are apt to be unfamiliar to non-Italians.

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Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett, 1988

INTRODUCTION

Poet, novelist, essayist, dramatist: Pasolini was a writer who made innovative contributions to poetry and prose fiction and a critic who continually engaged major literary and social issues—a man of letters in the forefront of his generation of Italian writers long before filmmaking added an international reputation. He was also a lay philologist who pursued the spoken language as editor, critic, and writer.¹

Although in the past decade a handful of books have appeared that go some way toward introducing Pasolini to an English-speaking audience, as a critic and theoretician he is still relatively unknown.² This translation of *Empirismo eretico* (*Heretical Empiricism*) makes available a collection of thirty-one pieces written between 1964 and 1971, most of which have never before been published in English. It contains almost all of Pasolini's essays on film theory, a substantial and significant body of work, as well as important essays on language and literature. The majority of the texts gathered here come from a time of literary silence in Pasolini's career following the impressive productivity of the fifties. With his creative energies channeled into filmmaking, Pasolini the writer during these years is primarily an essayist at a moment when his involvement in the world of ideas is more broadly intellectual than narrowly political.

Pasolini could always analyze a cultural situation perceptively, and for this reason the essays collected in *Heretical Empiricism* are valuable not only as process, the record of a serious intellectual inquiry, but as product, a provocative and original investigation into language and society. Well before the mass diffusion of computer languages he predicted the development of a technologically influenced language in which the expressive qualities of literature would have no place. While the Italian avant-garde of the sixties pursued its own (dead) ends, Pasolini urged a coming to terms with the new linguistic reality. As a cultural critic he unerringly asked the right questions and often foresaw what direction society would take, but as the personal passages of his "Apology" reveal, he could not reconcile himself to the world his intellect envisioned, one rapidly succumbing to what he called "bourgeois entropy."

Pasolini's title for the volume represents his dissatisfaction with what he regarded as an excessively formalistic tendency of current critical empiricism. As a Marxist who described his own approach as extravagantly interdisciplinary, Pasolini prefers a "heretical" empiricism, a stance

characteristic of his practice of holding discourse with but differentiating himself from established schools and movements. In these essays Pasolini is above all else a semiologist out of the intellectual matrix of Saussurean linguistics, but he also has a strong interest in anthropology, admires Lucien Goldmann and Roland Barthes, and incorporates Parisian intellectual currents into his discussion of Italian issues. The one discipline that is conspicuously absent from these writings is psychoanalysis.

The heterodoxy that Pasolini signals with his title is everywhere apparent, reinforced by one of his favorite labels, *scandal* or *scandalous*—the two forms occurring repeatedly in this and other Pasolinian texts. Both Pasolini's thought and life could be subsumed under the rubric of scandal, scandal given and scandal received. As an open homosexual, an innovative artist, and a societal gadfly, Pasolini could not help but give scandal to his traditionalistic society and to receive it back in the form of societal outrage and persecution.³ His response to society's reaction to himself was to institutionalize scandal, consciously to embrace a role that was to some extent chosen and congenial, to some extent odious and inescapable. All of Pasolini's deep loyalties—to the nonbourgeois, to Marxism, to language as expression rather than instrument, to "otherness"—are opposed to the course of post-World War II Western civilization and hence are scandalous. This consistently makes him a *scrittore scomodo* for his society, that is, a writer who makes his readers uncomfortable.

Even as a linguist Pasolini is "scandalous," proposing to add to the Saussurean dichotomy of *langue* and *parole*, both of which represent the "written-spoken," the intermediate category of a "purely oral phase of language." The importance of spoken language, and its constant collision with written language, are everywhere present in *Heretical Empiricism*. For Pasolini—and here his readings in anthropology are pertinent—speech is the linguistic bedrock that precedes society and history, the one form of language that has unbroken continuity from the beginning of human life to the present.

Although the essays collected in this volume reveal the remarkable extent of Pasolini's intellectual investigations, they are unified by their concern with language and their reflection of the basic underpinnings of Pasolini's thought: his commitment to Marxism, his hatred of the bourgeoisie, and his sense of alienation from society. These are the givens that, from early on in his life as a man of letters, underlie and inform all of his writings.

Marxism remained for Pasolini the only possible avenue of social and political justice, an unquestioned allegiance that coexisted with his permanent estrangement from the Italian Communist Party (the PCI), an estrangement that dated from his young adulthood.⁴ Always identifying

himself as a Marxist, Pasolini freely criticized the Party while at the same time maintaining, in the face of a growing opposition on the left of the PCI, that it represented the best hope of change in Italy.

For Pasolini's generation, the tenets of Marxism were shaped by the writings of Antonio Gramsci, often regarded as the most significant Marxist theorist of the twentieth century. First published in 1948-51, Gramsci's *Quaderni del carcere* (*Prison Notebooks*) were the fruits of his long imprisonment by the Fascist government, an ironically enabling isolation that produced his comprehensive reassessment of Marxism and of Italian history and culture. In pondering the Marxist economic problematic, which regarded political developments as no more than the expression of economic developments, Gramsci concluded that this was a basic error. As Chantal Mouffe observes, "This was to lead him to rethink all the problems central to marxism in a radically anti-economic perspective, and hence to develop all the potentialities present in leninism."⁵ The key to this reassessment is hegemony, in Gramscian terms the assumption of ideological leadership by a dominant group and its allies followed by the union of political, moral, intellectual, and economic objectives. This process begins as an identification within the economic group; it moves to solidarity of economic interests among all members of a class, and then, the final phase. Gramsci writes:

This is the most purely political phase, and marks the decisive passage from the structure to the sphere of the complex super-structures; it is the phase in which previously germinated ideologies become "party," come into confrontation and conflict, until only one of them, or at least a single combination of them, tends to prevail, to gain the upper hand, to propagate itself throughout society—bringing about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity, posing all the questions around which the struggle rages not on a corporate but on a "universal" plane, and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups.⁶

Gramsci's influence is palpable in *Heretical Empiricism*, not only in the frequent references to hegemony in the text but in Pasolini's concern with linguistics and the development of an Italian language. Language and linguistics are central preoccupations of the *Prison Notebooks*, reflecting not only Gramsci's own intellectual bent—his unfinished university thesis was in historical linguistics—but the issue of monolingualism, which had been an important political question since the unification of Italy in 1861. Beyond the direct influence on part one, "Language," Gramsci is an

informing presence throughout *Heretical Empiricism*, a spirit with whom Pasolini feels a profound kinship.⁷

Hatred of the bourgeoisie is not merely a predictable or perfunctory outgrowth of Pasolini's Marxism; it is clearly inseparable from the feelings of mutual rejection that structured his own relationship with society. He writes that the most insupportable aspect of the bourgeoisie is its "fatal racism," its intolerance of everything not itself—an attitude that he had experienced so painfully that he described his own exclusion as "more dreadful than the lot of a negro . . . or a Jew." Writing provocatively of the average middle-class citizen that "there is no discontinuity between him and a police chief or an executioner" is Pasolini's way of emphasizing the logical link between the failure to allow or even recognize diversity and the persecution of whatever is "other." He confesses a hatred too extreme to be overcome, a feeling intensified by his belief that all forms of human life are rapidly becoming assimilated to the bourgeois model, the process of "bourgeois entropy." As Pasolini recognizes, the danger of the bourgeois world is not the direct threat of oppression so much as the indirect one of allure. As Italian workers and peasants succumbed to consumerism and were willingly assimilated into the bourgeoisie, Pasolini could foresee their complete disappearance as identifiable classes—with the consequence that the next generation would lack any external means of self-definition.⁸ The state of his own country could only increase Pasolini's sense of alienation and hopelessness:

An irredeemable society, irreparably bourgeois, without revolutionary traditions, not even liberal ones. . . . I cannot accept anything of the world in which I live: neither the apparatuses of state centralism—bureaucracy, legal system, army, school, and all the rest—nor its cultured minorities.

Pasolini brings this worldview to bear upon the three major areas of investigation into language pursued in *Heretical Empiricism*: the revolution of the Italian language, the primary focus of "Language," Part I; the literary technique of free indirect discourse, his central concern in "Literature," Part II; and the question of cinema as language, explored in "Cinema," Part III. The intellectual and emotional infrastructure is more directly apparent in some essays than in others but it is always there, if only in the passing comment. Pasolini's reference to the steam engine as a familiar screen image, for example, casually describes the engineer as "an exploited man who . . . performs his job with dignity for a society which is what it is, even if it is his exploiters who are identified with it." Or, typically, there is an offhand remark that separates Pasolini

from other writers on the same subject. Anticipating the objections of linguists to his ideas, he comments that as an Italian he can't help but have "bad Italian (petit-bourgeois) habits." Similarly, a reference to his social class prompts the gratuitous parenthetical utterance "and which, however, I detest."

A central premise of Pasolini's linguistic thought, which he pronounced "one of the cornerstones of my way of seeing reality," is the assertion that the "real structure of all work is its linguistic structure." This shapes his approach to literature and film, resulting in the organization of Italian writers according to the kind of language they use, in the lengthy examination of free indirect discourse in Italian literature, and in the analysis of cinema as language, an idea that Pasolini was willing to take much further than were other film semiologists. The standard terms of Saussurean linguistics recur throughout all sections of the book, and the film terms Pasolini invents—*im-sign*, *kineme*—are designed to correspond to linguistic units. Ultimately, Pasolini will assert that all life is language, the manifestation of a General Semiology of Reality in which everything is an iconic sign of itself, a position that is flatly opposed by Umberto Eco.⁹

1

Pasolini's career as a whole reveals an unhesitating willingness to engage any issue, any controversy, any field of endeavor that attracted him: from the mid-fifties until his death in 1975 he participated vigorously in every major political, ideological, and intellectual controversy in Italy. Nevertheless, in the essays on language in *Heretical Empiricism* he displays a certain diffidence in writing about linguistics as a nonlinguist, as an unsystematic researcher, and even as an Italian—one whose native language gives him no basis of codified data for such study. The phonic and grammatical structures of Italian are, he writes, "unstable, arbitrary, infinitely changing, infinitely troubled by competing forms," while the standard literary language is "unbearable" to all serious modern writers. Yet, at the same time, the very instability of the linguistic situation is an attraction:

I, by speaking—in the pure and simple act of speaking—live a structure that is in the process of being structured: I myself contribute to such a structuration, and I know it, but I don't know what it is founded on and what it will be. . . . [My society] is a coexistence of two different social structures (the industrial North and the preindustrial South; and it is for this, for example, that it

is so hard for me not to imagine but to experiment in the concrete [language] of Italian culture). . . . For all these reasons I cannot and will never be able to relinquish a tension owed to the desire to bring order to the magma of things and not to content myself with knowing its geometry. . . .

Magma is a recurrent, significant word for Pasolini, used figuratively—as it can be in Italian—to indicate a confused and unpredictable mass. It also retains the charge of its literal meaning of incandescence, of molten energy ready to erupt and flow, willy-nilly. Pasolini wants to explore and tame the magma, to order and understand the unwieldy materials of language—especially unwieldy because Italian—and to do so both through the perspective of Marxism and through the scientific method, the analysis of empirical data in a “linguistic laboratory.”

In “New Linguistic Questions,” the most cogent and ambitious of the essays in Part I, Pasolini approaches the evolution of Italian by means of Marxist sociology. What he finds is a longstanding split between spoken and written language, one governed by practice, the other by tradition, but both inauthentic because they are applications to reality rather than experiences of it. The dominant language is the language of the bourgeoisie, which does not represent the majority of Italians. Nor is its bland conformity of use to any “writer of value.”

Pasolini places writers of the 1950s on a graph in relation to a middle line of standard Italian (where Fascist and clerical rhetorics are to be found—that is, language committed to a conservative ideology—along with texts of negligible worth). Below the line are second-rate naturalists and realists and writers in the various Italian dialects that were still spoken as a first language by large numbers of Italians; above are most of the significant writers, each bearing an idiosyncratic relationship to the common tongue, or *koinè*. The most striking phenomenon of this thorough classification is the practice of Carlo Emilio Gadda, generally considered to be the greatest Italian novelist of his time. Gadda, and others like him, can only be indicated by a serpentine line which dips below the line of everyday language for the spoken and dialectal but then brings this material back up to the higher level, bypassing the linguistic median of standard Italian entirely. This is an instance of *contaminazione*, a process central to Pasolini’s idea of free indirect discourse. In its specialized linguistic meaning “contamination” lacks the pejorative connotation inescapable in translation; it refers to “the action of one element on another with which it finds itself associated.”¹⁰ In Pasolini’s view, this creative combination of high and low, an indictment of the sterility of the standard language, might have eventually produced a true national language.

A new development, the influence of technology upon language, has rendered this literary evolution irrelevant: the "expressive" language of literature is being replaced by an "instrumental" language originating in the industries of northern Italy. In Marxist terms, a shift is occurring from the dominance of the language of the cultural superstructures to the language of the infrastructure or base. This language will inevitably become the language spoken by all classes and thus be genuinely national: "The technological phenomenon, like a new spirituality, permeates language from the roots to all its extremities, all its phases, and all its particularities." Just as man in the world of technology must fight against an ever-encroaching mechanization in order to preserve his humanity, so the writer under this new linguistic dispensation must fight to preserve literary expressiveness, not in opposition to the nascent language but *within* it. This difficult struggle will be against the all-devouring impetus of instrumentalization with its concomitant uniformity; but, for better or worse, Pasolini sees Italy as at last on the threshold of having an actual national language, one that will obliterate the linguistic social division between bourgeois language and lower-class dialect that literary Italian has always perpetuated.

The appendices to "New Linguistic Questions" reflect a significant aspect of Italian intellectual life and of Pasolini's life as a man of letters, the public debate carried on in the pages of mass-circulation daily newspapers and news magazines.¹¹ Many of the essays of *Heretical Empiricism* and the larger part of Pasolini's nonfictional writing are in some sense occasional pieces which ideally should be read in context, that is, in conjunction with the articles that provoked them. Although we miss the complete dialogue in which Pasolini's was only one voice, often engaging distinguished contemporaries such as Calvino, Moravia, and Eco, his replies usually give a good general indication of the views he is responding to. For our purposes these rebuttal essays are valuable as elaborations and clarifications of the original Pasolinian statement, primarily his insistence that the new language he has described is only nascent, not fully developed.

2

The essays grouped together in the second section of *Heretical Empiricism* are also primarily about language as literature in a society shaped by advanced technology and bourgeois culture. One of Pasolini's most carelessly written essays, the abstract and diffuse "Comments on Free Indirect Discourse," is nevertheless an illuminating study of free indirect discourse in Italian literature, a technique that interests Pasolini

because it "implies a *sociologicalconsciousness* in the author . . . the fundamental and constant characteristic of the Free Indirect." As always, the underlying thesis in Pasolini's linguistic investigations is bourgeois hegemony and its implications, and it explains his interest in free indirect discourse, as the technique through which a writer "immerses himself" in a character and narrates through this character. Here Pasolini discovers the potential for a significant linguistic oppression when the author, instead of adopting his character's language, simply conforms the language of the character to his own:

The most odious and intolerable thing, even in the most innocent of bourgeois, is that of not knowing how to recognize life experiences other than his own: and of bringing all other life experiences back to a substantial analogy with his own. It is a real offense that he gives to other men in different social and historical conditions. Part of the equation of the whole world with the bourgeois world is just such insensitivity, manifested in linguistic as well as in other forms of oppression.

This same subject, the writer's re-creation of social class in a character's speech, is clearly and persuasively treated in "The Will of Dante to Be a Poet," and it also informs the compelling original essay "The Bad Mimesis"—a stunning combination of Marxist and Continian criticism.

Section II contains more directly personal statements as well. Pasolini's most insightful analysis of his own position as social and political critic, a role that he plays only peripherally in *HereticalEmpiricism*,¹² occurs in the brief prose apology that he later appended to his poem "The PCI to the Young." The poem was Pasolini's immediate response to clashes between university students and police in Rome on March 1, 1965, and it harshly castigated the students, addressing them as spoiled children. No matter that the students challenged the oppressive system that the "boy policeman" defended; for Pasolini the student movement is only a "civil war," a fight *within* the bourgeoisie, whereas the only significant revolution would be made *against* the bourgeoisie:

Quit thinking about your rights,
quit asking for power.
A redeemed bourgeois must renounce his rights,
and banish from his soul, forever,
the idea of power.

This kind of counsel could offer little to the reform-minded students. More significant, Pasolini himself acknowledged its inapplicability to the historical moment. When he recollected the circumstances of the poem's composition in the tranquility of his apologia, he admitted that his own hatred of the bourgeoisie was not only "pathological" but sterile. At one time such hatred (Lenin's upon seeing his brother hanged, for example) could stimulate a correct perspective. Now, with the rapid disappearance of all that is nonbourgeois, it is a pointless gesture, but the only one that Pasolini—because of his personal trauma—can offer.

Pasolini's concluding recommendations to the students reveal the impasse that he had already admitted earlier in the essay when he says of his "provocative" stance toward the students, "In what other way should I put myself in rapport with them, if not thus?" He urges them to "reanalyze" their own petit-bourgeois condition, to substitute the role of intellectuals for that of students, and—"on the eve of the assimilation of bourgeois history to human history"—to make the choice of what is not bourgeois. Where such steps would lead is uncertain. Presumably, exchanging one label of privilege for another (student for intellectual) would give the students a wider field, but it would hardly resolve the basic dispute that Pasolini has with them. And given the inevitability of the assimilation of bourgeois history to human history in Pasolini's view, his last recommendation seems to be merely an empty gesture, a desperate but quixotic wish. Appropriately, the means of implementing it are left unspecified.

As Pasolini diagnosed in his observations on the student protest, this "civil war" was neither revolution nor an avenue to it. Accordingly, his own choice or necessity was to be a voice crying in the wilderness as each milestone of the Western lifestyle inexorably arrived in Italy. While this picture emphasizes the futility of Pasolini's response as a practical prescription, the dimension of moral witness should not be overlooked. His pronouncements often suggest the Old Testament prophet, passionate defender of a hard moral code and fearless castigator of its betrayers. Such extreme stances as his call for a Nuremberg trial for his country's leaders made him unpopular and notorious but did not curb his speaking out. However inspired by personal alienation, his behavior as a sociopolitical critic was arguably heroic, indisputably courageous.

This sense of alienation is most sharply focused in "Civil War," the record of Pasolini's impressions of the United States drawn from a brief visit in the fall of 1966. In the ferment of civil rights and Vietnam protests, the United States constantly reminded him of Europe during the Resistance, a locus of revolutionary hope and energy. Although he marveled at the lack of class consciousness and the absence of Marxist culture, Pasolini felt that Americans had arrived at a correct perspective by other means. Most tell-

ingly, he found the New Left irradiated by a sense of meaningfulness and possibility that he could not imagine in Italy.

3

In turning to film theory Pasolini is clearly intrigued by some of the same qualities that account for his love of the spoken language. Both the spoken word and the image have a primitive origin, and both express significant human attributes: the articulation of language, Pasolini believes, brought about or expressed the emergence of consciousness, and images are the stuff of unconscious processes—remembering and dreaming.¹³ While film corresponds to a *written* language only, it is one that remains primitive because it cannot express abstractions.

At the time these essays on film theory were written, Pasolini was also a successful filmmaker, but he follows his usual practice here of not drawing upon his own films to illustrate his theory.¹⁴ His concern is the purely theoretical one of establishing cinema as a semiological sign system that can be considered a language, an undertaking that brought him into dialogue (and disagreement) with other semiological film theorists of the sixties: most prominently, Roland Barthes, Christian Metz, and Umberto Eco.¹⁵ Pasolini has nothing but admiration for Barthes's adaptation to film of Roman Jakobson's work on metaphor and metonymy, but his differences with both Metz and Eco, among others, are substantive.¹⁶

Cinema, the *langue* of which individual films are the *paroles*, is the "semiology of reality" for Pasolini; that is, it reproduces reality with reality itself rather than translating it into another medium, as other art forms and languages must do. Through cinematic expressiveness reality is seen in a "new and special way," as a "natural semiology." This is both the point of departure of Pasolini's essays and their underlying premise.

According to Pasolini in "The 'Cinema of Poetry,'" his first essay on film theory, because cinema is "fundamentally irrational" its history should be that of a language of poetry. Instead, narrative, a language of prose, has dominated cinema and has reduced its essential nature to a subtext. In adumbrating the requirements for a cinema of poetry, a discussion focused upon the possibility of free indirect discourse in film, Pasolini is frustrated by the absence of a linguistic level. Free indirect discourse in film can only be stylistic, "a return to the origins, until the original oneiric, barbaric, irregular, aggressive, visionary quality of cinema is found through its technical devices." Later essays adopt different views. In "Living Signs and Dead Poets" (1967) Pasolini states that a cinema of poetry *cannot* be made by foregrounding technique.

For English-speaking readers "The 'Cinema of Poetry'" is the essay on which Pasolini's reputation as a film theorist is based, but as the first of his efforts to define the nature of film language, it was bound to undergo later modification.¹⁷ What "The 'Cinema of Poetry'" did accurately predict was Pasolini's subsequent efforts to develop a grammar for cinema and to consider further the semiology of cinema and of reality. These inquiries brought him into conflict with more systematic semiologists such as Metz. Metz had accepted Andre Martinet's assertion that a language requires the principle of "double articulation," that is, it must be composed of monemes, the smallest units of meaning, and phonemes, the smallest units of distinction.¹⁸ Such a double articulation makes it possible for a language to exist with only a limited number of phonemes, which can be combined to create a large number of monemes, or words. Cinema has monemes in the form of individual shots, but Metz contended that it could not be a language in the sense of a "strongly organized code" (*langue*); instead, he regarded it as only a species of *parole*, a special vocabulary or art language.¹⁹ For Metz an actual film is a rich text combined with a poor system.

In his most ambitious attempt to analyze cinema as language, "The Written Language of Reality," Pasolini argues that film does have a double articulation: the objects that compose the shot constitute this phonemic level, and they are combined to create the shot or moneme as phonemes are combined to create words. In Pasolini's terminology the shot/moneme is an *im-sign* (short for image-sign) and the object/phoneme is a *kineme*. (Having used Saussurean linguistics in this admittedly heretical way, Pasolini scrupulously notes differences between verbal and cinematographic forms of language throughout his essay.) Once he has worked out a grammar of cinema, Pasolini proceeds to analyze excerpts from a "prose" film and from a "poetic" film to demonstrate the difference between stylistic and grammatical analysis. His painstaking analysis of these excerpts both proves and defeats his point: it is possible to analyze a film according to Pasolini's "grammar," but doing so only establishes the value of stylistic analysis. It is not the "grammar" of Pasolini's examples, Olmi and Bertolucci, that interests us, but rather their styles—nor is it evident that describing their procedures in Pasolini's grammatical terms is necessary or helpful to stylistic analysis. To phrase this somewhat differently, Pasolini does not persuade us that his grammar is an essential concept for discussing the aspects of film that he treats as grammatical units.

During the 1970s it was common to dismiss Pasolini's basic semiological premises; today one can agree that his work did not lead to a scientific semiology of film while accepting some of his provocative ideas as illuminating *aperçus*.²⁰ In his essays on film theory, as in his discus-

sion of a new Italian language, Pasolini offers his hypotheses as a beginning rather than an end—one that should be linked, characteristically in the Pasolinian ethos, to larger societal issues:

One fact is certain, in any case; that it is necessary to work on these problems, together or alone, with competence or with anger, but it is necessary to work. It is necessary to create ideology; it is necessary to destroy ontology. Audiovisual techniques are in large measure already a part of our world, that is, of the world of technical neocapitalism which moves ahead, and whose tendency it is to deprive its techniques of ideology or to make them ontological; to make them silent and unrelated; to make them habits; to make them religious forms. We are lay humanists or, at least, nonmisologist Platonists, and we must therefore fight to demystify the “innocence of technique” to the last drop of blood.

These words, which conclude “The Written Language of Reality,” are significant as a statement, but they also reveal the emotion infusing texts that in other respects aspire to be scholarly and scientific—experiments undertaken in a laboratory. As the title of Pasolini’s first collection of essays, *Passions e ideologia*, reflects, passion and ideology are both necessary to his intellectual stance and his commitment as a writer.

4

The recurrent theme of *Heretical Empiricism* is that of change, from humanistic to technocratic dominance in both superstructure and infrastructure, from a heterogeneous to a homogeneous bourgeois culture, and from the writer’s longstanding cultural mandate to his marginalization. Like other European intellectuals of the sixties and seventies,²¹ Pasolini voices a sense of crisis in his profession and hopes for a Marxist “renewal of the mandate.” Emotionally resisting the changes which his intellect accepted as inevitable, Pasolini, in the years beyond the reasoned opposition of *Heretical Empiricism*, expressed a nostalgia that took increasingly extreme and even desperate forms, not only in the journalistic pieces collected in *Scritti corsari* (*Corsair Writings*) and *Lettere luterane* (*Lutheran Letters*),²² but in his popular “Trilogy of Life,” which reimagined in film the classic texts of *The Decameron*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and *The Thousand and One Nights*. Before turning to the radically different universe of Sade to inspire his final film, *Salò*, Pasolini wrote the “Abiura” (Disavowal) of the “Trilogy of Life,” an arresting expression of his disillusionment with sexual per-

missiveness and the subproletarian youth he had romanticized in these and other films.²³ Both the "Abiura" and *Salò* suggest a withdrawal from life itself, the first through a sweeping verbal denunciation, the second through the repulsive images of a monstrous artistic vision, that of the world of bourgeois entropy (read: fascism),²⁴ consumerism, and perverse indulgence that constituted contemporary Italy for Pasolini.

This trajectory has led some commentators to see Pasolini's murder by a young male hustler of the once idealized Roman underclass as a logical, even inevitable conclusion to his life.²⁵ It was "troppo pasoliniano," as Dario Bellezza has written, that is, quintessentially Pasolinian.²⁶ In "Observations on the Sequence Shot" Pasolini himself wrote: "*it is only thanks to death that our life serves us to express ourselves.* Editing therefore performs on the material of the film . . . the operations that death performs on life." Yet since the comparison between a life ended by death and a completed film is only metaphoric, the finality that this statement suggests is misleading. Once edited, a film has an objective existence that can be repeatedly re-experienced, while a life can be constantly reassessed according to the temper and values of the times and the appearance of new biographical materials: its completion does not confer the same objective status that a completed film has.

Pasolini's death was therefore only the beginning of what has continued to be a strong desire to place him in Italian culture. In 1975 the Italian Communist Party buried with full party honors the man it had expelled in 1949 for homosexuality. Five years after his death the Italian government, which had persecuted and prosecuted him throughout his adult life, lavishly funded an Anglo-Italian conference on Pasolini at Yale—the first such event dedicated to an Italian artist and intellectual to be held in the United States. Since that time, essays, books, university courses, and scholarly presentations on Pasolini have proliferated, and it is clear that as significant writer and filmmaker, as champion of the exploited, as scourge and victim of middle-class culture, and finally as martyr, Pasolini in death has achieved the greater meaning and expression of the self that "Observations on the Sequence Shot" heralded. Or, as he expressed it in his poem "*Le belle bandiere*" (The Beautiful Banners), "All the world is my unburied body."

Notes

1. In addition to his own Friulian dialect poetry and Roman dialect fiction, Pasolini edited the following anthologies: *Poesia dialettale dal novecento (Twentieth Century Poetry in Dialect: Parma, 1952)*, and *Canzoniere italiano. Antologia della poesia popolare (Italian Poems: An Anthology of Popular Poetry: Parma, 1955)*.

2. See Enzo Siciliano's definitive biography, *Pasolini: A Biography*, trans. John Shepley (New York, 1982); Pia Friedrich's study of Pasolini the writer, *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Boston, 1982); Stephen Snyder's study of Pasolini the filmmaker, *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Boston, 1980); *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Poems*, selected and translated by Norman MacAfee with Luciano Martinengo (New York, 1982); Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Lutheran Letters*, trans. Stuart Hood (Manchester, 1983); *Pier Paolo Pasolini: The Poetics of Heresy*, ed. Beverly Alien (Saratoga, Ca., 1982); and the special number of *Italian Quarterly* devoted to Pasolini, 82-83 (Fall-Winter 1980-81). Both Friedrich and Allen have useful bibliographies.

Earlier works in English are *Pasolini on Pasolini*, a collection of interviews, ed. Oswald Stack (Bloomington, 1969), and *Pier Paolo Pasolini*, ed. Paul Willemsen (London, 1977).

3. A primary document of the relationship between Pasolini and society is found in *Pasolini: cronaca giudiziaria, persecuzione, morte*, ed. Laura Betti (*Pasolini: Judicial Record, Persecution, Death: Milan, 1977*), pp. 225-245, a list of the prosecutions against Pasolini between 1949 and 1975, compiled by Pietro Mastroianni. The number of judicial proceedings against Pasolini, which Mastroianni maintains is only 70 percent of the real total, is roughly 365.

4. Pasolini had been the secretary of the local Communist Party section when he was expelled from its ranks on October 26, 1949, because of his indictment for "corruption of minors" and "obscene acts." (In 1952 an appeals court absolved him of these charges for lack of evidence.)

5. "Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci," *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London, 1979), pp. 177-78.

6. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Andrans Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, 1971), pp. 181-82.

7. "My teachers are Gramsci and Contini," Pasolini wrote—Elio Filippo Accrocca, "Che cosa fanno gli scnttori italiani: 10 domande a Pier Paolo Pasolini," *La fiera letteraria* (June 30, 1957). See Pasolini's poem "Le ceneri di Gramsci" ("The Ashes of Gramsci"), a long meditation at the grave of Gramsci.

8. In *Lutheran Letters* Pasolini refers to this process as "genocide" (p. 101).

9. See "The Code of Codes," pp. 276-83 for Pasolini's response to Eco's *La struttura assente (The Absent Structure: Milan, 1968)*, which contains Eco's objections to Pasolini's ideas.

10. *Il Nuovo Zingarelli: vocabolario della lingua italiana di Nicola Zingarelli*, ed. Miro Dogliotti and Luigi Rosiello (*The New Zingarelli: Dictionary of the Italian Language of Nicola Zingarelli: Bologna, 1984*), p. 440. The linguistic sense of *contamination* which Pasolini uses should not be confused with the more common literary meaning of "the

composition of a literary work obtained by blending together elements of various origins" (ibid.). This meaning can be pejorative in keeping with its origin in the Latin *contaminatio*, a term originally applied by critics of Terence's practice of incorporating parts of one Greek play into his translation of another—*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. N. C. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, 2d ed. (Oxford, 1970), p. 286.

11. In Italy, a small country whose cultural life is concentrated in two cities, Rome and Milan, men and women of letters are generally better known to each other and to the public than comparable figures are in the United States. Almost all of the numerous contemporary writers Pasolini refers to in his essays have some kind and degree of personal relationship to him as friends, enemies, disciples, or acquaintances. Moreover, Italian writers tend to participate visibly in the life of their country: they often write articles on a variety of subjects for mass circulation newspapers and weekly magazines, and it is not unusual for a writer to be elected to Parliament.

But Pasolini was a presence in Italian life well beyond the usual bailiwick of the writer-intellectual. Marxist, homosexual, defendant in numerous lawsuits: all of these roles of opposition attracted their measure of celebrity.

12. Towards the end of his life Pasolini increasingly formalized this role by writing regular columns for Italian newspapers, especially, beginning in January 1973, for the Milanese daily *Il Corriere della Sera*.

13. Pasolini uses "remembering" here in the Jungian sense of an unconscious activity.

14. In the interview that he gave to *Cinema e Film* in 1966 Pasolini emphatically denied the connection suggested by the interviewer between his filmmaking and his theory: "My efforts to extract a linguistic concept from the various films . . . is absolutely not an extension of my aesthetic activity, that is, of my cinematographic 'poetics.' It is absolutely not that."

15. Much of the work pertinent to the dialogue that Pasolini participated in has been translated into English. See, for example, Eco's *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, 1979), Barthes's *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York, 1977), and Metz's *Language and Cinema*, trans. Donna Jean Umiker-Sebeok (The Hague, 1974) and *Film Language*, trans. Michael Taylor (New York, 1974).

16. Jakobson's is an adaptation of the distinction between syntagmatic and paradigmatic subscribed to by other branches of Saussurean functionalism. See his "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances" in *Selected Writings II* (The Hague, 1971), pp. 239–59.

17. "The 'Cinema of Poetry'" first appeared in English as a translation made from a French translation in *Cahiers du Cinéma in English*, 6 (1966), 34-43; this was reprinted in the well-known *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley, 1976), pp. 542-558.

18. See pp. 22-29 of Andre Martinet, *Éléments de linguistique générale* (Paris, 1963), trans. Elizabeth Palmer, *Elements of General Linguistics* (Chicago, 1964). The essay by Christian Metz that Pasolini refers to is "Le cinéma: langue ou langage?" *Communications*, 4 (Paris, 1964), "Numero special, Recherches Sémiologiques," 52–90, rpt. in Metz's book *Essais sur la signification au cinéma* (Paris, 1969), pp. 39-93, and included in his *Film*

Language (New York, 1974), pp. 31-91.

19. *Essais*, p. 47.

20. Teresa de Lauretis, in "Language, Representation, Practice: Rereading Pasolini's Essays on Cinema," asserts that Pasolini's writings on film theory foreshadowed contemporary psychoanalytic and spectator-oriented theories. Her essay appears in the Pasolini issue of *Italian Quarterly*, pp. 159-66. See also, de Lauretis's comments on Pasolini in *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington, 1984), p. 220. A good summary of objections to Pasolini's film theory can be found in Antonio Costa, "Pasolini's Semiological Heresy," in Willemsen, pp. 32-42, rpt. from Costa, *Teorie e metodi di analisi del linguaggio cinematografico [Theories and Methods of Analysis of Film Language: Milan, 1974]*.

21. Cf. Michel Foucault's assessment of the disappearance of the "great writer" and the emergence of technological expertise as the badge of the new "specific intellectual" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon et al. (New York, 1980), pp. 128-29: "The 'universal' intellectual derives from the jurist or notable, and finds his fullest manifestation in the writer, the bearer of values and significations in which all can recognize themselves. The 'specific' intellectual derives from quite another figure, not the jurist or notable, but the savant or expert. . . . Meanwhile we are at present experiencing the disappearance of the figure of the 'great writer.'"

22. *Scritti corsari* (Milan, 1975); *Lettere luterane* (Turin, 1979).

23. The "Abiura" originally appeared in the *Corriere della Sera*, November 9, 1975 (although it was dated June 15, 1975). It is reprinted by Giorgio Gattei, ed., *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Trilogia della vita: Decameron, I racconti di Canterbury, Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (Bologna, 1975), pp. 11-13, and by Franco Brenni, *Per conoscere Pasolini* (Milan, 1981), pp. 615-19. For a discussion of the "Abiura" in relation to Pasolini's last films, see Ben Lawton, "The Evolving Rejection of Homosexuality, The Sub-Proletariat, and the Third World in the Films of Pier Paolo Pasolini," *The Italian Quarterly*, 21, 22 (1980-81), 167-74.

24. In one of his last articles, Pasolini wrote: "I find myself explaining and arguing at one and the same time, that all middle-class persons are, in fact, fascist, always, everywhere and to whatever party they belong." — *Lutheran Letters*, p. 100.

25. Pasolini had laid the groundwork for such speculation in a variety of ways. He habitually patronized male prostitutes and had already suffered physical attacks in doing so. Moreover, his writings contain numerous references to himself as a martyr and even what seems to be a specific prefiguration of his death when he describes the Pasolini-Dante figure of *La divina mimesis* (*The Divine Mimesis: Milan, 1975*—published posthumously) as "killed by blows of a club." Such references are the stuff of myth, but it is probable that the passage alludes to Pasolini's feud with the avant-gardists of Gruppo '63.

26. *Morte di Pasolini (Death of Pasolini: Milan, 1981)*, p. 107.

LANGUAGE

TO THE READER

Since this is a "report"¹ on the linguistic question more than a collection of essays, I have not carried out here the personal selection and revision that is made in cases in which an author feels that his own prestige is involved. I have presented these texts as "documents," and references to the responses of others as "enclosures." The search is under way, the book is open. It's a question, after all, of understanding if a deduction such as mine ("Italian is born as a national language"), with the annexed prediction (it will be a question of Italian as a language of signs, of a branch language of the great anthropological evolution that concerns the development of neocapitalism in the entire industrialized world), serves some purpose or not; how one must react to it; if a writer should acquire a kind of anguished fatalism in the presence of which nothing can be done, or if he should be urged to continue his linguistic research with more determination. Certainly the matter is of less concern to the user of the written "*langue*" as potential "*parole*" than to the user of the written language as pure and simple communication, particularly when there is a statistical prevalence of its oral manifestation. In short, I want to repeat it at the beginning—it isn't a question of the old linguistic "querelle" about Italian. If for no other reason, for example, than that Italian dialects no longer belong to a particularistic national world but belong to a world that by definition is dialectal, that includes approximately half the human race, and which is placed in a scandalous dialectical relationship with the entire neocapitalistic or socialistic industrialized world. In short, the Italian linguistic question makes sense only if it is analyzed comparatively: with the analogous technological evolutions of the capitalistic world, and with the various relationships between concrete but particular languages and languages that are abstract but communicate widely, relationships which present urgent problems in the Arab countries, in the new African nations, in India, etc.

As for these pages, they are written—and the reasons are the same reasons for the book—outside of style: in a functionality that I find hard to recognize when adopted by someone like me who, even as a writer of critical notes, has never been able to forget that he is a writer of literature. Some are articles written in two hours for a newspaper, with the timidity of someone who betrays his own morality.

When these pages were not cranked out hypocritically according to the standards of immediate consumption, then they are notes or fragments of a diary, and they are certainly among the least happy that I have ever written—and certainly I have never written happy things, especially in the area of my private life, or at the point where private life and public life meet; but these are particularly anguished if for no other reason than that the “desire for style,” with the infinite vital patience that it contains, came to me less during the course of these confused investigations.

Note

1. Pasolini's expression for his work is literally a “collection of documents.” This brief address “to the reader,” so clearly prefatory, is the next to last piece in the first section of *Empirismo eretico*. In the original Italian publication of this work, this essay, like all the appendix essays, is set in italic print. The overall italics have been removed here, and normal emphasis has been restored.

NEW LINGUISTIC QUESTIONS

To reach in concrete terms certain linguistic conclusions that I have in mind, I will choose a particular point of view: the relationship between writers and the Italian *koinè*.¹

First of all, what is this *koinè*? Linguistic descriptions aren't lacking: Cesare Segre is responsible for the latest one, "à la Bally," and I defer and refer to it.² In the meantime, however, it could be said that to the writer's eye ordinary Italian seems like a dual entity, a "saintly duality": instrumental Italian and literary Italian.³

This implies a fact which in any case is well known: *in Italy an actual national Italian language doesn't exist*. So if we want to look for any unity between the two sides of the duality (spoken language and literary language), we must look outside of the language, within that historical individual who is currently using these two languages, who is one, and who is historically describable in a unitary totality of experiences. Such a person, the spiritual site or cohabitation of the duality, is the Italian bourgeois or petit bourgeois, with his historical and cultural experience, which there is no need to define here. I think it is enough simply to allude to it as something of common knowledge.

He is the same bourgeois person who uses the *koinè* when he speaks and the literary language when he writes. He thus brings the same spirit to both these languages.

The osmosis with Latin, the various stratifications owed to historical diachrony, the synthetic tendency, the prevalence of expressiveness in communication, the coexistence of many competing forms, etc., together define spoken Italian and ordinary literary Italian, which are therefore characterized by an exchange of usage: their duality is not fundamentally antithetical. They are two possible choices to express what is fundamentally the same existential and historical experience.

So that if I had to describe Italian in a concise and lively way I would say that it's a question of a language which is *not* national, or imperfectly so. It covers a fragmentary historicosocial body, both in a vertical sense (historical diachrony, its formation in layers), and in an extensive sense (the different events of regional history which have produced various, virtually contemporaneous little languages, dialects, and successive different dialectizations of the *koinè*.) On such a linguistic covering of a reality which is fragmentary and

therefore not national is projected the normative impact of the written language—used in school and in cultural relations—which was born as a literary language and thus is artificial, thus is pseudonational.

The spoken language is governed by practice, the literary language by tradition: both practice and tradition are inauthentic elements, applied to reality, not expressions of it. Or, better, they express a reality that is not a national reality; they express the historical reality of the Italian bourgeoisie, which from the first decades of [national] unification until today has not known how to identify itself with the whole of Italian society.

The Italian language is therefore the language of the Italian bourgeoisie, which, for particular historical reasons, has not known how to identify itself with the nation but has remained a social class: and its language is the language of its customs, its privileges, its mystifications—in short, of its class struggle.

Needing then to outline a history of twentieth-century Italian literature as a history of the relationship of writers to such a language, I would first have to distinguish [between two possibilities]: if this literary history is an average, typical history, then the relationship of writers to Italian as a middle-class language is the peaceful relationship of someone who remains in his own linguistic ambience and, in short, employs an instrument that is congenial to him (the typical literary vocation never appears as palinogenetic with regard to language). If, instead, such a literary history is a history of values, then I must say that Italian as the language of the bourgeoisie seems like an impossible, unbearable language: it is characterized by a violent centrifugal force.

If, to simplify, we imagine ordinary Italian as a line, we will see a series of absolutely negligible works in terms of value placed there, while works that count in terms of literary value are rejected by that centrifugal force and are all placed *above or below that middle line*. Understood thus as a history of the relationship of writers to the *koinè*, twentieth-century literature is geometrically composed of three lines: the middle one, on which only purely scholastic-academic literature has moved (in other words, that which conserves the fundamental unreality of Italian as a bourgeois language); the high line, which, according to further gradations, produces a literature of a type which is variously sublime or hyperlinguistic; the low line, which produces naturalistic-realistic dialect literature.

But let us observe this reassuring geometrical figure a little better.

We will see arranged on the middle line: (a) works of anonymous, pseudoliterary, traditional compilation on the literary side (for example, all Fascist and clerical rhetoric); (b) works of entertainment and escape, or, alternatively, timidly literary works (something a bit

above journalism), on the spoken side (the prose of the novel of the same period as art prose, from Panzini, included in part, onwards—I cite at random—Cuccoli [*sic*],⁴ Cicognani, etc.).

On the low line: (a) writers in dialect (among those of the first order, Di Giacomo, Giotti, Tessa, Noventa, etc., to the lowest); (b) naturalist or realist imitators of Verga (all of the second or third order and thus irrelevant if not as a phenomenon).

On the high line, rejected for different and often antithetical reasons by the centrifugal force of ordinary Italian, are placed almost all of the twentieth-century Italian writers, but at very different levels.

At the highest, even sublime level, we find the zone of the "hermetics."⁵ Ordinary Italian has propelled them up here for reasons endogenous to language, not for criticisms regarding society. It is the zone of ivory towers—if we still want to amuse ourselves by designing a geography of symbols on the blackboard. The Italian used within these towers is a language meant for poetry: the refusal of or the noncollaboration with Fascism, for example. It conceals a reactionary vocation of various kinds—the bourgeois introversion that equates the world with interiority, and interiority as the seat of a typical aesthetic mysticism elaborated from a decadence which is above all French and German, etc., etc. All this implies the figure of a baroque classicism, an expressionist classicism, an anticlassicist classicism. Such approaches derive from the fact that in these poets of the sublime style there is an intimate ideological contradiction: that is, they do not realize that their apparently revolutionary rejection of reality is reactionary in substance, and therefore they readopt all the schemes of linguistic restoration: in a word, they perform a classical operation. If some of these writers become aware of the error and attempt a modification of their ideological position in the sense of a major interest or love of the world (in the case in point, the speakers), they contaminate their classicism with crepuscular elements of the spoken language (and so the hermeticism of Luzi, for example, is linguistically defined).⁶

On a lower level cohabit a series of "hyper-written" works whose ideology is not the myth of poetry but that of style, and therefore their content is not literature itself but historical life with its problems brought into a climate of literary tension so violent that it seems like a kind of mannerism in the Longhian sense of the word.⁷ There we can place the most diverse names, from that of Vittorini to that of Banti, or that of Roversi because of the complete poeticizing of reality at work in his last novel, or even that of Leonetti's books of verse.

At a level still closer to the middle line we find the zone of the *feluche*:⁸ that is, stay-at-home hermeticism, ironized D'An-

nunzianism: the acceptance of the spoken language as literary preciousness (the spoken language reidentified with Tuscan); and Cardarelli, Cecchi, Baldini, etc., can be named without any particular order of precedence.

On a level closer still to the middle line we find writers whom we can designate as nostalgics (meaning linguistic nostalgia): Cassola and Bassani are the most typical of these. With the *sublimis*⁹ style, fundamental to their elegiac and civil inspiration, they mix a spoken language like the language of their (naturally bourgeois) fathers, who, seen in the light of memory, are ennobled, become objects of *recherche*, whose spoken language is ennobled with them, that ordinary Italian which, after having rejected them—through a violent historical and ideological protest, for example, anti-Fascism—recalls them with the fascination of a place promised and lost, a poetic normality in that it is all-consumingly ontological.

The less experimental and less stylistically lofty writers are closer still to this Italian which is considered standard and not deeply criticized. The relationship of Soldati to that everyday Italian, for example, is a fundamental acceptance of it as the language of the nineteenth century (a position similar to that of Cassola and Bassani, but less elegiac, less poetic, and more ideologically relentless in believing in the illusion of the existence of a good bourgeoisie that never did exist). The relationship of Delfini to that everyday Italian is also similar to that of Soldati, Bassani, and Cassola: there is a remnant of nostalgia for what the bourgeoisie could have been and was not, the displacement of the focal point onto the good, poetic side of northern bourgeois life, onto a certain epic quality that, in the bosom of certain families and certain milieus, has also succeeded in being poetic. There is also delusion in Delfini, and therefore the instability of irony. The language of Bertolucci,¹⁰ instead, is entirely lost in that indescribable sense that a domestic bourgeois existence is able to create when it is identified with all existence.

Moravia has at bottom the oddest relationship with ordinary Italian: it is based on a misunderstanding that Moravia accepts defiantly: scorn for the bourgeois condition, and the consequent merciless criticism which is the thesis of all his works, together with acceptance of the language of the bourgeoisie as a standard language, as a neutral instrument, as if it weren't produced and developed historically by that very bourgeoisie but were "found" paradigmatically in history. Moravia thus despises bourgeois language on the one hand (expressively singling out only some elements, as if they were separated from the linguistic system, and contenting himself with ridiculing only those), while on the other hand he has a kind of childish and bookish respect for the language

as for a normally functioning mechanism. He has unconsciously made Italian a kind of neutral European language, and he unconsciously brings non-Italian characteristics to it: its grammar is simplified, competing forms are rare, the sequences tend to be progressive, the spirit analytical, the excessive availability of the syntagmas limited, etc., etc. Moravia's Italian is an "invented" ordinary Italian.

The relationship of Calvino to ordinary Italian lies between those of Soldati, Delfini, and Moravia—it isn't polemical. There is an acceptance of norms and an adoption of them in a framework of the European type, especially the French type, and all this is made possible by ironic detachment.

Elsa Morante's relationship with ordinary Italian is very peculiar: she occupies, so to speak, all the levels above the middle line, from the level that barely touches everyday language to that lofty level occupied by those who write in the *sublimis* style. In fact, Morante accepts Italian as a mystical body of grammar and syntax apart from literature. She puts grammar in direct contact with spirit. She has no stylistic interests. She pretends that Italian exists there and is the language that the spirit has offered her to express herself in this world. She ignores all its historical elements, both as spoken and as literary language, and she grasps only its absoluteness. Thus her Italian, too, is a complete invention.

Almost all the authors I have named—and also those I have not named, but who are placed *above* the line of ordinary Italian—have a natural relationship of cultural, sentimental, and linguistic equality with their heroes and with their milieu. In short, their heroes are bourgeois like themselves, and their environments are bourgeois like their own. Therefore they can enter, almost imperceptibly, into the souls of their characters and "live" their thoughts: that is to say, they create the stylistic condition of a *free indirect discourse*.¹¹ Therefore they use their language, and, as I was saying, it is an exchange of languages that occurs on a level of equality. In such a way the language of their character becomes a written and, all things considered, literary language, while the language of the writer—who becomes one with his character—becomes more than lively or expressive.

And, when the hero is a folk hero, his language, as experienced by the writer, is only the language of the writer lowered by a single degree, not a real *mimesis*, but a kind of long, attenuated "quotation." This is the case, for example, with Moravia's *Two Women*, with the slight traces of the Piedmont dialect of the characters of Soldati, with the Emilian inflections in the bourgeois spoken language of Bassani, etc.¹²

A remarkable phenomenon exists, however, that radically changes

the terms of this perspective. That is, it happens by chance that sometimes the bourgeois writer *completely* "reanimates"¹³ the spoken discourse of his character, and that this character belongs to the working class or peasantry: which, in any case, is sublinguistic and dialectal. What is the relationship of Gadda to ordinary Italian? He, naturally, like every writer of value, finds it absolutely unbearable and is thus impelled away from it. But then in the case of Gadda we will have to add a new line to our geometric sketch on the blackboard: a serpentine line that, starting from above, descends—intersecting the middle line—toward the bottom, and then returns once again toward the top—again intersecting the middle line—and then again toward the bottom, etc.

In short, in order to absorb the sublinguistic materials, free indirect discourse on a written page involves an incursion toward the lower languages, toward the strongly dialectized *koinè* and toward dialects. But such materials—and this is the point—are not elevated to the level of everyday language in order to be worked out and objectified there as a contribution to ordinary Italian. No, they are elevated into the high or very high zone in a serpentine line and worked out in an expressive or expressionistic way.

But another type of serpentine line also exists, which has not only an expressionistic function but also an objective or realistic one. However, a preamble is necessary before describing the outline of this linguistic operation. The reader has already understood completely that my sketch of literary history as the history of the relationship of the writer to ordinary language is encamped entirely within the boundaries of the 1950s. To complete such a sketch it will be necessary to add another element typical of the literature of those years. They were characterized by an ideological research with strongly rationalistic ambitions (in a word, it aspired to make a revision of all the antecedent literature from prewar hermeticism to postwar neorealism). Contemporary with and, in part, in contradiction to such a rationalistic revision, a kind of experimentalism occurred that contained within itself those expressionistic elements of decadence and those sentimental elements of neorealism that they [those years] wished to overcome ideologically.

Literary experimentalism had as its basis the experience of Gaddian free indirect discourse, the "serpentine line" which intersects ordinary Italian from top to bottom (increasingly traumatic as the expression of the bourgeois world). Yet in such an operation there was an infinitely greater ambition of objectivity than in Gadda. At bottom it remained expressionistic because the salvaged material reanimating the interior monologue of a dialectal hero was developed through contamination in the high spheres of the refined literary language, a bit as in Gadda, as I was saying.

But with respect to Gadda, the operation was strongly simplified; for one thing, technological plurilingualism didn't exist in the high zone, and the literary zenith appeared as a single language. Moreover, in the low zone, speakers were chosen with a specific function of sociological research and social indictment: here, too, nothing of the multidialectal, but a single dialect in a detailed situation. Free indirect discourse was only a means, at first of knowing and then of making known a psychological and social world unknown to the nation.

The broadening of content was an effect of the poetics of realism, and hence of social commitment; the linguistic enlargement was a contribution to a possible national language through a literary operation.

Today this kind of commitment seems rhetorical and inadequate, and at the same time the ambition to create the premises of a national language through literature (as has been believed for so many centuries, for that matter) appears illusory.

In short, it's a question of recognizing a crisis—and a very serious crisis—in the sense that: (a) the literary world which was the object of the revisionist polemic of the fifties no longer exists, or rather it reappears under one aspect—the avant-garde—that seems to reproduce old twentieth-century literary requirements, while in reality it's a question of a completely new and different phenomenon; (b) the linguistic operation which has free indirect discourse and its contamination as a basis is suddenly disclosed as superseded through an unforeseen fading out of dialects as a linguistic problem and subsequently as a social problem.

This linguistic—and not only stylistic—crisis is evidence that something profoundly new is occurring in our society. Anticipating all other observations that could be made—for example, the information given by the avant-garde movements in this sense—I would not hesitate to radicalize this crisis through what Fortini, citing Mayakovsky, calls the "end of the mandate" of the writer; that is, the end not only of the commitment but of all those ideas, absolutely unpopular for that matter, that have appeared as surrogates or as evolved aspects of the commitment. In the sociomoralistic environment in which Fortini carries out his investigations, the historical reasons for this "end of the mandate" are not clear enough: perhaps in a neutral and in some way more scientific environment, such as linguistic research, one can observe better, from a greater distance, the series of reasons.

Already at the end of the fifties the first symptoms of a crisis occurred that at that time seemed to be a restoration. As a rare item of information, little known by those not expert in these matters, I

would place the beginning of this crisis in the "purist reaction" due to the initiative of a little group of Neapolitan writers gathered around their magazine* (a reaction to that plurilinguistic, dialectal, experimental research that had been the concrete literary manifestation of the commitment). Nevertheless, let us also consider Cassola and Bassani as in part involuntary protagonists of a similar reaction through their desperate and poetic bourgeois nostalgia. Their style (which I have mentioned) is only a continuing, albeit covert, series of "quotations" from the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois language used by their self-employed professional fathers and grandfathers and by the circle of their provincial acquaintances. The research by these two writers was authentic, and Bassani especially has produced some works of poetry through this *mimesis* of the *stylus medius* (I invent a category unknown both to the historian and to the *stylcritik*).

But the repercussion of such an operation in literary society—stripped of necessity and become paradigm—became one with the petit-bourgeois neopurism developed by the aforesaid Neapolitan writers and became part of that reactionary operation that prepared the present situation of disintegration and confusion (the classical and neodecadent revival, the rediscovery—on the part of journalistic criticism and by some part of the public—of values that appeared superseded forever). It's true: today, for example, it happens that in a neutral reading, where Gadda is concerned, the cultured and technological part assumes a strong significance while the popular-dialectal part tends to sound weak; it is also true that the discourse reanimated to function as a protest against a miserable, thieving, hungry world, available because it is prehistoric, suddenly seems to be an outmoded stylistic phenomenon—and the Riccettos and Tommasos move about remote as on a Grecian urn. It is also true that a similar process intended to reanimate the raving interior monologues of the Albini Saluggias, carried out more realistically in the heart of a factory like Olivetti, seems equally naive—belonging to a world of goodness and solidarity left behind by the vertiginous evolution of the factory itself.¹⁴ Nevertheless, even the reaction to all this—the bourgeoisie, ennobled and "rediscovered" like a lost epoch in Bassani, Cassola, Soldati, or Prisco, and in short in every distinguished purist adapter of middle-class language—seems to be located beyond historical boundaries and to no longer find, short of such boundaries, any addressee as an accomplice in a similar nostalgia.

The at least apparent vitality of the avant-garde movements must be placed together with the above-mentioned devitalization of the

* *Le ragioni narrative*. [Narrative Themes]

most recent literary experiences, which, moreover, for a linguist are the most blatant symptom of the cultural crisis, which until this moment has lacked nongeneric explanations. The lines above and below ordinary Italian on which recent literary history has proceeded as the history of the relationship of writers to their class language are, in any case, lines of literary language, of literature. In these first years of the sixties, an at least theoretically new type of relationship has been seen instead: a relationship that is not set in the ambience of literature but, on the contrary, departs from a base of operation which is openly *not* literary. I believe that the avant-garde movements are not what has always been said, with unacceptable banality, that is, repetitions of the twentieth-century avant-garde movements. For the following two reasons: (1) Classical avant-garde groups placed their anarchic and subversive requirements in relation to the situation of their present; they had a stable and static idea of society, and they offered themselves as an equally stable and static alternative. Instead, the avant-garde movements of the sixties pose their iconoclastic demands against a prefuturistic situation, as it were. They are messianic; they assign to the future—parroting it—a situation secularized and reversed by definition (this is why they can also “integrate” themselves into the present and not present themselves as dynamiters). (2) Classical avant-garde groups continued to make literature and conduct their antilinguistic action with literary instruments: theirs was only innovation as an end in itself and carried to extreme, and therefore scandalous, consequences. Instead, the avant-garde groups of today conduct their antilinguistic action from a base that is no longer literary but linguistic: they don't use the subversive instruments of literature in order to throw language into confusion and demystify it, but they set themselves at a linguistic zero point in order to reduce language—and thus values—to zero.

Theirs is not a protest against tradition but against Meaning: the places to destroy are not stylistic but semantic units.

So far this position of the avant-garde movements has proved to be unassailable, and those who have tried to attack it have fallen into banality; they have always been mysteriously defeated—probably because while the zero point of the avant-garde movements corresponds to a real zero point of culture and history, the positions from which literature defends itself no longer have any correspondence with a reality that is in the process of changing. I am saying straight out, nevertheless, that the zero point chosen by the avant-garde is only apparently a defiantly free choice: it is, in effect, a passive acceptance. They believe that they find themselves through free choice in a place where they find themselves instead through coercion.

And I am also saying straight out that the best point of view to observe and understand this modification of the landscape of real history is the one found at the summit of our own historical experience, even if by now it is surpassed or relived upside down as delusion.

We thus find ourselves in a moment of cultural imponderability, a cultural void, populated by writers each of whom does nothing but follow his own particular history. Like a linguistic island or an area of conservation. It isn't a question of the usual crisis but of an entirely new fact that evidently reverberates from the structures of society.

It will thus be necessary to leave literature for a moment and bring together two sciences that border on literature: sociology and linguistics. Let us therefore give a sociolinguistic glance at the Italian panorama of these years.

We may begin in the most legitimate way, I believe, at the nearest place: this one, the very thing under my nose, my own declarative prose, which, not being produced by a specialist, cannot fail to impress at once by its high percentage of technical terms. If we then go back to the origins of such terms, it becomes still more significant: in fact, for the most part they don't come here from linguistics as much as from sociology, the rest from other technical languages, from the most disparate ones. In short, the very object of my extraliterary research helps me in explaining a literary situation. For some years in Italy the osmosis of critical language has no longer been with Latin, according to philological tradition, but with the language of science. For that matter, all the descriptive terminology of the chaotic condition in which literature finds itself—terminology used both by the avant-garde movements and by the surviving literary diaspora—is that of the cultural industry and of sociology (in addition to the by now classic terminologies of medicine, psychoanalysis, economics, and, above all, Marxism).

Furthermore, it might be noted how the technical contributions owed to linguistics itself have a special character: they tend to explicitly instrumentalize language through the intensified and dominant idea of its instrumentality. This idea of language as an instrument—exactly in the positive sense indicated by semiotics—is the dominant sign of all the linguistic panorama that surrounds us.

Beyond this first phenomenon that we have under our noses let us immediately observe a contiguous area, for example, the language of journalism. Recently, through an initial and quantitatively irrelevant snobbish regulation based on the French or English model (owed to the radical-illuminist bourgeois press),¹⁵ there is no doubt that Italian journalistic language has assumed a truly specialized

character. A special type of communication rules and determines it, presupposing a society completely represented by its public opinion, at a certain pseudorationalistic level. So that a journalist can only invent within a very restricted system, and none of his inventions must be shocking; they must be tested and, in any case, prefigured according to statistics—still dilettantish and pseudoscientific—based on the demands of the masses. But in any case, determined by them. A newspaper article characterized by expressiveness will be thrown into the wastebasket because the average reader would take it upon himself to ignore it. Newspaper language is therefore extremely instrumentalized according to a new hypothesis concerning society as a society of a certain elevated rationalistic and thus antiexpressive tenor. Moreover, it extracts from Italian grammar only those elements that serve communication and thus obtains through elimination a grammar that is revolutionary in a certain way with respect to the expressive characteristics of traditional grammar.

In many instances a specialized language can be characterized precisely by its pure and simple selectivity—as, for example, the language of television. If television occupies itself in its programs with all knowledge—and thus does not have any special competency—it must be able to speak of everything: making various special languages coexist in its watertight compartments under diverse rubrics—all, however, characterized by some similar phenomena, by factors of selection: to be precise, euphemism, reticence, the pseudospoken *cursus*, the ironic understatement, etc., etc. If in the language of television it is possible in practice to use all words, in reality a high percentage of the words of a language is excluded, and thus the individuality of the television sublanguage lies in its sectarian selectivity.

Furthermore, so far as we are concerned, the language of television appears to have set aside its explanatory function in favor of an elegant Italian, grammatically pure even unto a fundamental purism. Now the explanatory functions of television appear to be oriented toward a grammatical and lexical standardization that is no longer purist but instrumental: communication prevails over every possible expressiveness, and that little bit of silly petit-bourgeois expressiveness that remains is subservient to a brutal instrumentality.

Another observation that is worth making about television language is more marginal but no less interesting: the monotony of the diagrams of the sentences of that typical television specimen which is the style of television news reporting. It doesn't even seem to be Italian. The framework of the sentence repeats forms which are as uniform as possible, avoiding any diagrammatic expressiveness, in-

cluding the tone of voice. One seems to hear a French or Czechoslovakian announcer. Such monotony already begins to be taken as the model of serious spoken discourse. People of the lowest cultural level believe that Italian is to be spoken this way, through a series of clauses whose structure is unified, if possible, even in pronunciation.

For that matter, such a type of discourse is by now what officially takes the place of the old type of emphatic discourse.

Let us examine the language of politicians, and let us take as an example a sample chosen at random from a recent inaugural speech:

The productivity of investments in the highway plan thus depends on their coordination in a programming of the infrastructures of transportation that tends to resolve disequilibriums, eliminate obstructions, reduce the waste of competition among the different means of transportation, and, in a word, give life to an integrated system on a national scale.

That sentence is taken from a speech by Moro [delivered] in the meaningful moment of the opening of the *autostrada del Sole*¹⁶ (meaningful insofar as that "infrastructure" is certainly a typical and new moment of linguistic unification); but this isn't a speech to technicians, as the amount of technical terminology—which is enormous—might indicate. It's a speech to a normal public, transmitted by television to a number of Italians of all conditions, cultures, levels, regions. Furthermore, it's not a question of a speech suited to the occasion (an old inauguration), but of a speech that Moro has invested with a high social and political functionality. His sentences, so crudely technical, really have the function of *captatio benevolentiae*:¹⁷ they take the place of those steps that once would have been peroration and emphasis. In fact, Moro instrumentalizes the opening of the turnpike in order to make a political appeal to Italians, recommending to them an extremely delicate political fact: that of cooperating in resolving a difficult economic situation, of cooperating in theory and in practice; that is, to be disposed to face personal sacrifices. Such a recommendation in the Italian that we are used to considering our national language would have required a tour de force of the *ars dictandi*: symmetrical colon [*sic*], Latinizing *cursus*, humanistic vocabulary, and emphatic clauses.¹⁸ Something fundamental has therefore happened to the roots of official political language.

It, together with literary language, has always been characterized by that anachronistic phenomenon typical of the Renaissance, which is osmosis with Latin. Now such a phenomenon has been substituted at its base by another phenomenon—osmosis with the technological language of a highly industrialized civilization.

The fundamental characteristic of such a substitution is that while osmosis with Latin, which was aristocratic in character, tended to differentiate political language from other languages, technology tends toward the opposite phenomenon: that is, to assimilate political language to other languages. In a word, it could be said that *the creative centers, processors, and unifiers of language are no longer the universities, but the factories.*

For example, observe the enormous linguistic power of suggestion of *slogans** in the "language of advertising"—an actual language inasmuch as it is a system with its own internal norms and regulatory principles tending toward fixity. Some of these norms and linguistic principles are already beginning to pass into spoken language, but what is most relevant is the linguistic archetype offered by the slogan: an actual metaphysical maximum of diagrammatic fixity.

Naturally in the language of advertising as well, the homologizing and, I would say, creative principle is technology [which is] therefore the absolute supremacy of communication; and thus the slogan is the example of a type of "expressivity" so far unknown. Its premise is, in fact, expressive, but through repetition its expressiveness loses every characteristic of its own, is fossilized, and becomes totally communicative, communicative up to the most brutal finality. So much so that the way of pronouncing it also possesses an allusiveness of a new kind that might be defined with a *monstrum* definition†—expressiveness of the masses.

Finally, the common or plain language—that *koinè* dialectized on its lower level, Latinized on its higher—which has been until now a most sacred Italian duality and, as such, not a national language: now, this *koinè* presents signs of a deep modification in the sense of a tendency toward unity. I ought to offer recorded conversations as examples of this modified *koinè*. I am not a specialist; I don't have any. I am relying on the experience of the reader, who will agree with me that a large part of the speech of the North is markedly technical. It happens every minute that one hears such a technification of language, slight on the level of elementary and daily necessity, strong up to the point of constituting an actual specialized, slangy language on the level of the trades, the professions, business, industry. On a strongly exaggerated but substantially accurate page of Ottiero Ottieri we read:

"But hadn't we sent him to Pavia?"

Farina: "Doctor!¹⁹ He stayed there two months! We tried Monza."

*Pasolini uses the English word "slogan" throughout this section. Emphasis has been removed.—Ed.

†I.e., an unusual or strikingly exceptional definition.—Ed.

Carlo shoots a menacing glance at the phone. "Well, what did he do at Monza?"

Cavalli: "He wasn't pulling his weight. I myself shifted him to Codogno."

Carlo: "You must recalculate the incident of transfers on distribution costs for me. We have to maintain our business strategy of incentive, but at the same time we can't go over 32%!"

"Okay, okay, doctor."

"If it goes over 32% we must cut back."²⁰

Conversations of this sort are now the rule in an industrialized and Europeanized Italy. They contribute new characteristics to that pseudounification that the bureaucratic and commercial languages had given to Italian: new characteristics owed to the spiritual novelty of the phenomenon. Neither bureaucracy nor business was a spiritually new fact for man and for Italian—technology is.

Moreover, new characteristics have appeared at various times in the long history of our nation, but the language has always reacted to them by adopting such innovations as new linguistic stratifications to add to the others. It was only a literary and not a national language; therefore, it could neither absorb nor surpass the old stratifications with the new, and it limited itself to accumulating them, continuously and absurdly augmenting its own grammatical and lexical patrimony.

Today, therefore, we find ourselves in the midst of an ongoing linguistic diachrony absolutely without precedent through a historical fact of an importance in some way superior to that of Italian unity in 1870 and of the subsequent governmental-bureaucratic unification: the new linguistic stratification, the technicoscientific language, does not fall into line with all the preceding stratifications but presents itself *as the homologator of the other linguistic stratifications and even as the modifier of languages from within.*

Now, "the principle of homologation" is evidently to be found in a new social form of language—in a technological rather than humanistic culture—and the "principle of modification" lies in linguistic eschatology, that is, in the tendency to instrumentalization and communication. And this for politicoeconomic exigencies, which are always more important than linguistic ones.

In short, it can be said that in the past no fundamental linguistic fact ever had such a power of homologation and modification on the national level and with so much contemporaneity. Neither the Latin archetype of the Renaissance, nor the bureaucratic language of the nineteenth century, nor the language of nationalism. The technological phenomenon, like a new spirituality, permeates language

from its roots to all its extremities, all its phases, and all its particularities.

What is then the economic-political structural base from which emanates this single principle, regulator and homologator of all national languages under the sign of technology and communication? At this point it isn't difficult to advance the hypothesis that it is the ideal moment in which the paleoindustrial bourgeoisie becomes neocapitalistic, at least *in nuce*,* and technocratic language is substituted for the language of the bosses.²¹

The complete industrialization of northern Italy, now on a clearly European level, and the kind of relationship of such industrialization to the South, has created a truly hegemonic²² social class, which, as such, is truly the unifier of our society.

I mean that while the upper and lower bourgeoisie of the paleoindustrial and commercial type has never succeeded in *identifying itself with the entire Italian society*, and has simply made literary Italian into its own class language, imposing it from above, the nascent technocracy of the North has identified itself hegemonically with the entire country and is therefore developing a new type of culture and language that are actually national.

Not being a politician or a sociologist, I would not dare to contextualize these affirmations, except to adduce here several *litotes*, to reassure, in short, that we are only at the beginning of this phenomenon, and that involutions, regressions, resistances, survivals of the old Italian world will be put off realities but always relevant to our history: that the Fascist wound will continue to bleed, etc., but nevertheless that reality, at last become conscious and thus irreversible, is the establishment of power as the evolution of the capitalistic class (there hasn't been any barbarian invasion!) toward a truly hegemonic and thus unitary position.

Therefore, in some way, with some hesitancy, and not without emotion, I feel authorized to announce *that Italian has been born as a national language*.

It will not be difficult to believe that it is not easy to define what this Italian is or, better, will be. At this point, with this definition, my contribution as maker of books and not as linguist should cease. But I would not want to surrender the field without having first furnished some circumstantial data and having anticipated some reasons for expectation.

In the linguistic-literary field an apparent prevailing of the Rome-Florence axis (with some accentuation of Rome, or even of Naples) had taken place in these last two decades: so much that Rome is spoken of in glossological centers as being the final irradiating

* In a nutshell.—Ed.

center of language, the capital of a finally unitary State, the seat of bureaucracy, etc. In short, the deeply vertical and broadly horizontal circulation of the language appeared to have found its center in Rome. The neorealistic culture had had Italo-Roman as its language, and on such a base, absolutely foreseeable and reassuring, I mean traditional, it was thought that the nationalization of Italian would be set in motion.

Things have instead, as has been seen, suddenly changed: Roman-Neapolitan culture has shown itself to be suddenly and definitively diachronic—and, after the respite of purism which I have mentioned, the cities of the North, the Turin-Milan axis, now domineeringly advance their candidacy as irradiating centers of culture and national language.

At the present moment the North can certainly not propose its own dialects as an alternative—which it has itself contributed to rendering archaic, neither more nor less than those of the South—nor its pronunciation, nor its own linguistic idiosyncrasies: in short, its dialectizing of the *koinè*. But it is the industrial North that possesses that linguistic patrimony which tends to take the place of dialects, that is, those technical languages that we have seen homologize and instrumentalize Italian as a new unitary and national spirit. The North possesses such a technological language as the foremost linguistic means of its new typical way of life: it is this technical sublanguage that the industrial North proposes as competing for national predominance against the Roman-Neapolitan dialectal speech, and which—in effect—is already victorious by means of that same hegemonic unifying influence that the aristocratic monarchies, for example, have had on the formation of the great European languages.

In a word, it is the revenge of the locals: it is the victory of the real Italy over the rhetorical one—a first peripheral Roman-Neapolitan wave corresponding to the first real moment of an anti-Fascist but still semideveloped and paleobourgeois Italy, and now a second definitive northern wave, corresponding to the definitive Italian reality, the wave that can be proclaimed to the Italy of the imminent future.

What will be the most important characteristics of such a national Italian? Since technological languages have an international formation and since they tend to be strictly functional, they will presumably bring to Italian some habits typical of the most progressive romance languages, with a strong accentuation of the communicative spirit, approximately according to these three tendencies:

1) A certain inclination toward the progressive form, which will involve a greater fixity in the diagrams of Italian sentences, the falling away of many competing forms, with the prevalence of one

form that by chance or for reasons of use is dearer to the most authorized users of technical languages, that is, prevailing among the Turinese and the Milanese. (It is well known, for example, that the Turinese have always learned Italian as a foreign language, and they already have a habit of standardized learning that will be accentuated in the functional spirit of technology, up to the leveling of all Italian to the inexpressive precision of technological communication.) All things considered, it will be a matter of an impoverishing of that Italian that has been up to now so lavish of its own riches, its availability of forms, so much so as to make the heads of all of us a marketplace of competing linguistic forms.

2) The cessation of the osmosis with Latin, which has always been conserved in all the diachronic leaps in the very peculiar evolution of Italian—as a characteristic of the literary language of the elite—becoming more dense and fruitful precisely in the most revolutionary times (for example, humanism, or neoclassicism, etc.).

3) The prevalence of the communicative purpose over the expressive purpose, as in every language of high civilization and few cultural levels—in short, homogenized around a cultural center irradiating both power and language together. The conservation of the various diachronic strata during history, I repeat, or rather the richness of forms of Italian, was simply owed to the fact that Italian was a literary language and therefore on the one hand conservative and on the other expressive. Now the guiding spirit of language will no longer be literature but technology. And therefore the purpose of language will reenter the cycle of production-consumption, impressing on Italian that revolutionary thrust that will be precisely the prevalence of the communicative over the expressive purpose.

Before taking my leave, a last glance at that literary picture whose condition of disintegration and chaos has been the occasion for these observations: now it is clear that such a chaos corresponds to an ideal moment of void in history; one type of Italian society is finished and another is begun. In this interval [we see] the confusion of literature, deprived of reference points and prospects; and, in this delay [we see] the substantial lawfulness of the avant-gardes, whose subversion of language is nevertheless undertaken against a language that no longer exists, and whose idea of a future language consists of a technological mythicizing that has nothing to do with the real contribution of technology to language. It is clear that after the awareness of the real Italian linguistic revolution, the function of the avant-garde movements is over. And only through a deepening of such awareness will a writer be able to find his function, postulating a "renewal of the mandate."

First of all, he will be able to formulate in correct terms the

apocalyptic prediction that in the future there will be no more demand for poetry, if, presumably, in the future, there will be only a radicalization of the struggle between communication and expressiveness typical, for that matter, of every language. In this sense the Italian man of letters is aided by the urgency of linguistic problems that for him are a revolution—while in France, in England, etc., they are only an evolution—since by now French and English have been national languages for centuries in the integral sense of the term. And a linguistic evolution, in terms of the reaction of men of letters, is much more insidious than a revolution. For a French or English or German or Russian man of letters the question lies in a competition of technology and science (and of the cultural industry), in a fatal mechanization of the reactions of the recipients of its products, etc. For an Italian writer the question appears instead in a more radical way: to learn the *abc* of a language, with all that this implies—first and foremost not to fear the competition of technological language, but to learn it, appropriate it, become “scientific” (for example, no longer to work, according to the terms of the old mandate, on “prospects,” that is, on the past projected into the future—but on “hypotheses” that presuppose only other hypotheses, without illusory palingenetic purposes of man, etc., etc.).

In the bosom of this new linguistic reality, the aim of the struggle of the man of letters will be linguistic expressiveness, which will radically coincide with the liberty of man with respect to his mechanization. And his will not be an arid and foolish struggle if he takes possession of the language of the new type of civilization as a personal problem. How to appropriate this language to himself? For a bourgeois man of letters, with a bourgeois ideology, the prospect is that of being suppressed sooner or later by the language begotten by that very power which he does not oppose and which he does not struggle against: he has every right to predicate his quarrel on his condemnation to incomprehension, that is, to his death preceded by a long formalistic agony. For a man of letters who is not ideologically bourgeois it's a question of remembering once again, with Gramsci, that if the new Italian reality is producing a new language, a national Italian, the only way to take possession of it and make it one's own is to know with absolute clarity and courage what it is and what the national reality that produces it is. Today, as never before, the problem of poetry is a cultural problem, and today, as never before, literature is demanding a scientific and rational—that is, political—way of knowing.

(1964)

Notes

1. Pasolini uses the Greek *koinè* for "common language" throughout this essay.

2. Pasolini refers to the Italian edition of Bally's *Linguistique générale et linguistique française* (Bern, 1932), which Segre edited and introduced (Milan, 1963).

3. A language that is both written and spoken is seen as a tool, a means of communication made homogeneous by institutional pressures and conventions such as the mass media and the industrialized workplace. It is this language that Pasolini calls "instrumental" as opposed to a special language reserved for literature, which he often refers to as "expressive."

4. Cuccoli is probably an error for Carlo Coccioli.

5. Hermeticism is a tendency in modern Italian poetry whose name, derived from Hermes Trismegistus, indicates works closed to the uninitiated. It preferred nonrhetorical and analogical language that would fully exploit the suggestive powers of the word, but it came to be identified with the merely obscure. The principal hermetic poets are Eugenio Montale, Giuseppe Ungaretti, and Salvatore Quasimodo.

6. G. A. Borgese coined the term *crepuscolari* to describe a group of poets whose dominant tone was often that of melancholy. In their desire to create a poetry of simple things and intimate feelings they introduced the language Pasolini refers to. See Introduction, pp. xviii-xix, for a discussion of the linguistic meaning of "contaminate."

7. A reference to the art historian Roberto Longhi and to Mannerism, a historically interim style between High Renaissance and Baroque.

8. Probably means "official" or "academic," since the *feluche* is a ceremonial hat worn by naval officials, diplomats, and professors as part of their formal attire.

9. The *sublimis* style, the Italian descendant of the Latin high style described in Longinus's treatise *On the Sublime*, was considered to be particularly appropriate to tragedy.

10. Here the writer Attilio Bertolucci rather than his son Bernardo, the filmmaker. Both father and son were friends of Pasolini.

11. See "Comments on Free Indirect Discourse," pp. 79-101, for a full discussion of free indirect discourse.

12. In *La ciociara* (1957) Moravia's characters use a Roman speech while Soldati and Bassani add regional touches of Piedmont and Emilia respectively.

13. The verb *rivivere*, which Pasolini uses whenever he is speaking of free indirect discourse, has the sense of returning to use or reacquiring vigor when it is applied to institutions such as speech; hence in this particular context it will consistently be translated as "reanimate." In other contexts, other meanings of the verb may be more appropriate. For Pasolini, recreating speech in writing is always a process of bringing it back to life, even if the speech in question is that of the author's own time.

14. These are all working-class figures: Riccetto is the protagonist of Pasolini's first novel, *Ragazzi di vita* (1955); the title, translated into English as *The Ragazzi*, means young male hustlers. Tommaso is the protagonist of *Una vita violenta* (1959), translated as *A Violent Life*. L'Albino Saluggia in Paolo Volponi's *Il Memoriale* (*The Memorial*, 1962) is a factory worker who develops a disease of the chest.

15. Illuminism was a European philosophical and cultural movement of the eighteenth century which proposed to apply rational analysis to human problems.

16. The *autostrada del Sole* was the first Italian freeway, a milestone of the postwar recovery.

17. "The capturing of good will," a rhetorical strategy for winning over the audience at the beginning or peroration of a speech.

18. *Ars dictandi*, the art of speaking, or rhetoric; *cola*, plural, parts of a sentence; *cursus*, the pattern of accent.

19. A respectable form of address to a university graduate.

20. *The Chair-Mender* (*L'Impagliatore delle sedie*, 1964), p. 29.

21. *Padrone*, translated here as "boss," is a highly charged and politicized word referring to the exploitative class of employers and proprietors.

22. See Introduction, p. xv for a discussion of the Marxist term "hegemony."

Appendices

AN ARTICLE IN *L'ESPRESSO**

In the third issue of *Espresso* of this year there was a good summary of my lecture on "New Linguistic Questions" (published in *Rinascita*¹ of December 26, 1964): now, in the fourth issue, introducing the two responses of Moravia and Eco, the columnist appears to have forgotten everything that he had diligently summarized. It's enough for me to cite the third line, in which, putting in quotation marks a sentence of his own and thus making it pass for mine, he makes me announce with solemnity that "the new Italian language is born, that of the technological bourgeoisie."

I had said instead: "In the course of the Italianization of Italy, which was emerging as a linguistic leveling owed to great sociological phenomena (urbanism, internal emigration, the trend of the working class to become bourgeois, the development of the basic infrastructures, exceptional instruments of linguistic diffusion—radio, cinema, television, popular newspapers), something truly more profound and violent than a normal settling of society happened: what happened, in other words, is that in the old dominant (but not hegemonic) humanistic bourgeoisie a new technocratic bourgeoisie (with strongly hegemonic tendencies) is taking over. Such a bourgeoisie is at the same time the irradiator of economic power, of culture, and therefore of language. And because it, given its real power (its hegemonic tendency), potentially identifies itself with the entire nation (as had happened in France, first with the monarchy, then with the revolutionary and liberal bourgeoisie), it potentially renders Italian a national language for the first time."²

In itself the new technological language of the bourgeoisie doesn't interest me—personally I detest it—and my task as a writer is that of opposing myself to it, but not by ignoring it. It is a real phenomenon, but it isn't presented as a new "stratification" of Italian (one of the many "stratifications" that, juxtaposing and not surpassing each other, have formed the expressive richness of Italian with all the riskiness that that involves), but as a stratification that: (a) is owed to a "new spirit" (that doesn't have equivalents in the past), the tech-

*February 7, 1965. [*L'Espresso* is a mass circulation weekly news magazine similar to *Time* and *Newsweek*. The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

nical spirit; (b) coincides with the birth in Italy of the first truly hegemonic bourgeoisie (although still only potential). Therefore, such a stratification is not juxtaposed to the others, but is presented as a ratifying and unifying principle both of preceding stratifications and of the various languages that compose present-day Italian.

Now, I am not without ideology, or liberal (that is, so devoted to the ancient forms of the bourgeoisie as to wish to ignore the new, even as Malagodi is preparing the new conservative party in the service of the industrial hegemony of the North):* my contention is thus not linguistic, it's political.

It is clear to an intelligent person (and one who knows literary and grammatical Italian!) that my essay is presented as a diagnosis: therefore, it has the characteristics of being objective and analytic. The last two pages, however, although hurried for reasons of textual economy, are testimony to a strong interpretive, yet still uncertain, will. And at any rate they are a part of that phase of "renewal of Marxism" that is in itself probably the most relevant and determinant cultural fact of the sixties.

Here I want to make some comments that really serve to free the debate from the regressive phase to which it is, as always, being reduced.

.....

Concerning the new report by Barbato, a significant little episode comes to mind. At the premiere of my film, a Fascist,³ truly a rather emaciated young man, publicly shouted an insult at me in the name of all his beautiful young associates: I lost patience (I regret it); I slapped him and slammed him to the ground. My friend Laura Betti was present and therefore saw the whole scene "with her own eyes."⁴ I don't know through what premeditation the newspapers that reported the episode reversed it (running false photographs), so that I became the one beaten. The thing has been repeated and has gotten into the public domain: so much into the public domain that Betti, in her aggressive ingenuousness, speaking about it to me, although she had seen the scene "with her own eyes," said, "the Fascist who hit you." I don't know if I can speak of ingenuousness in Barbato's case as in Betti's: the fact is that his behavior is identical. He has read my lecture "with his eyes and understood it with his brain." In the meantime, however, in the public domain it came to pass that I said "the new Italian language is born, that of the technological bourgeoisie," rather than, as it is in reality, "Italian is born as a national language"—and he has made the interpretation of the public domain his. I don't understand what affected him, whether good faith or ill will, or rather the "superior reason" of his profes-

* Things subsequently became even worse than this.

sion. It doesn't matter; it's more important to see how this tendentious interpretation has been formed in the context in which a journalist like Barbato works.

I believe that the true, deep reason that the "milieu" in which Barbato works shows itself suspicious in the presence of my study is the aversion to accepting a change of perspective, an adaptation to new problems which are presented as profoundly modifying every established condition in society as well as in individual consciousness.

Through a deep anguish that joins the Communist parties of Eastern Europe, France, and Italy, Marxism confronts the problem of a profound and difficult renewal: even the Catholic Church moves.⁵ However, I am not aware that there is movement in the bourgeois parties, if a certain movement of adaptation to the new exigencies by the northern bosses is excepted. It's the first real and great defeat of the Italian laity: their humanistic laziness, their substantial (and irrational!) trust in the bourgeoisie, has betrayed them. They refuse to push themselves into new and dangerous zones, to accept new layers of reality.

.....

As for Moravia, I must say that responding on this occasion he has not had ears to hear the true nature of my argument: he, too, instrumentalized it in terms of my personal technical research as an author, while it was only a passage for a vaster comprehension of Italian reality, in which then to operate "also" linguistically; and he busied himself to demonstrate something absolutely obvious, that Italian has always been an average language. Let him show me that Italian has always been a national language—and not an average "language" of the elite or of a given class. Moreover, because of his usual impatience, he attributes the "notion" of a new, already adult Italian to me, while I limited myself to baptizing an infant. I am quite willing to believe, for example, that engineers and technicians may speak the courtly Italian (even though the word isn't exact) with their "ladies," and it is true that the Italian of Moro still is pettifogging and humanistic at bottom. Things are *beginning* to happen, *they haven't happened!*

For a useful continuation of the debate, therefore, in *Espresso* or elsewhere, I would say that the following points should be kept in mind:

1) I have not spoken, I repeat, of a new Italian, but of the birth of a possible new (national) Italian. To imagine it, hurriedly, as an adult figure means: (a) not to recognize it; (b) to recognize it through delayed experiences, already felt, and then to set it aside as effective new political and social reality.

2) I have not set out the problem as a problem of personal

research. (I do not yet know what I will write, and it is futile to attribute a renewal to me that in reality does not exist in the terms in which it is attributed to me: that is, the abandoning of dialect for a more complex language at a high level. In what language have I written my essays and my poems? It isn't necessarily the case that I am abandoning my research in our dialects. Not at all. Dialect remains a reality, even though it's slowed down. In any case, the reduction of this research of mine to a personal fact also signifies doing away with and silencing its public characteristics.

3) I did not want to revive the dialect/language quarrel: and to read my essay in this sense means to backdate it, with the unconscious racist hatred that the bourgeoisie always has for the language of the people and with the store of rationalistic banalities that govern every irrational hatred of this sort.*

Notes

1. Communist Party weekly; see pp. 3-22 for this essay.
2. Although Pasolini uses quotation marks, these are not his exact words but a summary. See Introduction, p. xv, for a discussion of the Marxist term "hegemony."
3. A member of the neo-Fascist party, the *movimento sociale italiano* (Italian Social Movement).
4. The film premiered was Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* (1962).
5. A reference to the effects of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council of 1962 and the progressive papacy of John XXIII (1958-1963). The Communist Party in the early sixties had to adapt to Italy's economic boom and participation in the Common Market; it also had to decide where it stood in the growing dispute between the Soviet Union and China. Pope John's private audience with Khrushchev's relatives and the encyclical *Pacem in terris*, which endorsed collaboration between people of different ideologies, gave the Communists new respectability and opportunities on the Italian political scene.

*The only ones who by this time can participate in an original manner in the discussion of problems regarding the dialect-language relationship are the experts: see, for example, the splendid little essay by Avalue in *Questo e altro*, n. 8.

Expressing surprise that "not even Malagodi or Colombo says these things," Enrico Emanuelli (returning to the discussion on language in the *Corriere della Sera* of February 21)¹ cites a passage of mine on linguistic questions with the addition of some question marks to indicate the locations of his doubts.

Here is the passage with the real signs of doubt strewn about by Emanuelli: "The new bourgeoisie of the cities of the North is no longer the old dominant class which has stupidly (?) imposed from on high the political, cultural (?) and linguistic unification of Italy, but is a new dominant class (?) whose real economic power truly (?) allows it, for the first time in Italian history (?), to present itself as hegemonic. And thus, it is simultaneously the irradiator of power (?), of culture (?), and of language."²

First question mark: yes, "stupidly," and not only for what refers to the Fascist period, which has been the most blatant instance of such stupidity (and Emanuelli certainly agrees with me), but for all that of Fascism which there had been before and for all that of Fascism which there remained: I mean to say the petit-bourgeois spirit, which is in general entrusted with the role of the area of cultural norms. At the time of the unification of Italy through the Piedmontese or Piedmontized petite bourgeoisie (the South was a land of bandits, or "*Lazarionitum*,"³ as Marx calls it; approximately 90 percent of Italians were illiterate; that is, not only did they not know how to write Italian, but they were not even Italophonic), it was believed that linguistic unification could be resolved through petit-bourgeois pseudohumanism, which possessed only a literary language—Italian—suddenly become a national language (although unknown to around nine-tenths of Italians). And it was believed that it could be imposed with the same methods with which taxes were imposed, that is, through the bureaucracy and the police. Passing from paternalistic to Fascist authoritarianism. This is why "stupidly." Certainly! Not all the bourgeoisie was stupid! In Manzoni himself, for example, an unreliable normative linguist (who risked ruining his novel) coexisted with the great poet. But thanks to God,

*Wednesday, March 3, 1965. [The Milanese daily newspaper *Il Giorno* expresses the views of ENI, the National Hydrocarbons Agency. The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

Graziadio Isaia Ascoli⁴ (he, too, a bourgeois), as Gramsci writes, "counterposed thirty pages to the hundreds of pages of Manzoni to demonstrate that not even a national language can be artificially promoted by imposition of the state; that the Italian language is developing by itself and will develop itself only insofar as the national cohabitation has promoted numerous and stable contacts among the various parts of the nation, that the spreading of a particular language is owed to the productive activity of writing, of trade, of the commerce of men who speak that particular language. . . ."⁵

We of the petite bourgeoisie have always uncritically accepted the idea of this literary-humanistic language. And we have always thought that the center of diffusion would have been Rome, that is, the governmental center of the state: perhaps, naturally, a Rome rediscovered by neorealism. While it was clear that the real center of diffusion was destined to be the North: because the language of the modern bourgeoisie is the language of industry, not that of bureaucracy. It is Gramsci once again who remembers in 1918 how "Professor Alfredo Panzini published a dictionary of the modern spoken language a few years ago,⁶ and it appears from it how many 'Milanisms' have arrived even in Sicily and in Puglia. Milan sends newspapers, magazines, books, merchandise, traveling salesmen throughout Italy, and therefore also sends some of the peculiar expressions of the Italian language that its inhabitants speak."

This fact of language as an "oral sign" (and not the "literary" sign of Cattaneo or Dossi) is a real antecedent of the new linguistic evolution. But only today for the first time in the history of Italy does one have an entire language, the language of mechanics or applied science, which is used equally throughout Italy (albeit, with different pronunciations). And what counts more is that it is no longer a question of a language that is "only" particularistic, but it presents itself as a guiding language; it has in itself a unifying spirit as the language of a new type of culture.

Second question mark: why has Emanuelli put this sign of doubt after the word "cultural"? Perhaps because he doesn't believe in the "culture" of the Italian bourgeoisie? But I use the word "culture" in the sense in which a Marxist uses it, and the way it is currently used by ethnology or by anthropology. It isn't a value judgment, but a point of fact.

The day before yesterday, Sunday, I went to "visit" a refugee camp, an ex-concentration camp near Alatri: a terrible place, where, in the tragic oblong huts—with vaulted roofs, dominated by little round towers, under grey, nameless hillocks—lives a group of [Italian] expatriates from Tunisia. Well, I noticed that their "Frenchness" did

not consist only of a fairly orthodox Francophilia (a thousand times more orthodox—if one thinks that it took place in emigrants in an Arab ambience—than any Italophilia of peripheral Italians), but in a touching Frenchifying cultural process. The way in which these Frenchified Tunisian Italians greeted each other, shook hands, requested that their parents or friends living in Rome be greeted, etc., was far closer to the norm of the French bourgeoisie than any mannerism used by a southerner, up to now, to express an Italian model (the police-lawyer style buffoonery, etc.); the fact is, the French middle class Frenchifies its foreigners and *alloglotti*⁷ with a real cultural prestige, thus lending them a real and not merely an imitation humanity of customs and expressions.

Third question mark: well, on this expression, "dominant class," I have no doubts, even though it's a terminology which is a bit threadbare and a bit surpassed by the dominant forms. I therefore leave the perplexity to Emanuelli and to the contributors to the third page of the *Corriere*.⁸

Fourth question mark: this "truly" takes the place of what Gramsci would have called the condition of "necessity" of hegemony.⁹ The Italian bourgeoisie of the North found itself in such a condition of necessity through inertia, outside—almost—of its consciousness and will, through an acceleration of productive development, and therefore of economic power which has something brutally pragmatic about it.

Fifth question mark: yes, for the first time in Italian history. However much I try, I can't find a precedent. Only the Roman conquest presents similar characteristics, and in fact . . . the universalism of the Church has always been contradicted by local idiosyncrasies which developed their own languages inasmuch as they established the bases of their own power (the bourgeoisie of the communes, etc., etc.).

Sixth question mark: I mean a substantially economic, not codified "power." It probably doesn't want to be codified: its pragmatism and its technicality exclude the metaphysical nature of statutes. It tends to defer to something else a codification that leaves it free: this something else is the Italian state. The struggle for exclusive possession of this pretext which the State always is for Capital is between the forces of labor (the center-left) and conservative forces (the liberalism of Milan rather than of Naples). But this doesn't have anything to do with linguistic questions (?).

Seventh question mark: still again on the word "culture". . . . Well, let us make some further clarifications: the "petit-bourgeois culture" (through a shove from below, that is, from the level of the middle classes—the right to vote, etc.) had opposed and defeated

"agrarian classicism" in an acceptance of romanticism and decadentism which was, however, always substantially classical. A new shove from below, owed to the Resistance, to the at least formal realization of democracy—the Republic, the vote to women, etc., etc.—has in turn challenged and defeated Fascist "petit-bourgeois classicism" (in this struggle the Marxist opposition has had a strong weight: that is, a sort of "popular classicism" was taking form through the Gramscian commitment and literary ideology). Now, the technocratic-technological culture does not challenge any particular classicism, but it challenges, and is about to defeat, all the classical and classicist past of man—that is, humanism. Its novelty is that of potentially coinciding not with a new epoch of history but with a new era of humanity: the Era of Applied Science.

The instruments of this culture are the great means of diffusion of news: newspapers, radio, television. Instruments, nothing more. Not autonomous entities (to which to submit every responsibility, as do in concert a journalist of *Espresso*, a Marxist linguist, and Moravia himself).¹⁰ They didn't fall from the sky. To refer to them as other than simple instruments of a culture means to want, perhaps for different reasons, to avoid discussion.

It is true that, once invented, new means of cultural diffusion can no longer be ignored. But the application of science in the production of these new means of diffusion of culture is the very beginning of their further specific cultural contribution. The immediate goal of the new structural principle of the language (technological hyper-language) and of its means of diffusion appears to be communicativeness. And in fact, a radio or television message that isn't understood in the very moment in which it is perceived is absurd. Just as a mechanical language peculiar only to Milan or Turin isn't conceivable.

But this is not to say that what is clear and universally understandable is always rational. Many times good sense, which is the opposite of reason, makes extremely obscure and irrational things appear to be clear. Thus, it is very probable that the new type of guiding language is communicative but not rational: and that its irrationality is masked by a sort of technical *qualunquismo*, as it was masked earlier by a humanistic *qualunquismo*.¹¹ However, while the second is a particular case, with an especially Italian significance, the first is a general case that applies to all the immediate future of mankind. Under this millenary profile—and given the metahistoric tendencies of every depressed culture—I hope that Emanuelli and his circle will understand me better: and feel how narrow their inferences are on my eventual steps forward or backward.

Notes

1. The *Corriere della Sera* (Milan, 1875-) is a major daily newspaper, for many years without rivals as Italy's most distinguished paper.
2. Although this passage appears to be a direct quotation from "New Linguistic Questions," it is actually a summary.
3. *Das Lazaronitum* is a Marx/Engels coinage from the Italian *lazzarone*, a Neapolitan beggar. The *-itum* ending is equivalent to English *-dom* or *-ism*, suggesting an archetypal form of group, in this case what Marx meant by lumpenproletariat. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Sul Risorgimento italiano* (*On the Italian Risorgimento*), ed. Ernesto Ragionieri (Rome, 1959), is probably Pasolini's source for the word. The editor wishes to thank Professor John M. Cammett for this source.
4. Pasolini indulges in wordplay here since Ascoli's first name means "thanks to God."
5. The article Pasolini cites, "La lingua unica e l'esperanto," first appeared in *Il Grido del Popolo*, February 16, 1918, XXIII: n. 708, and is reprinted in *Antonio Gramsci, Scritti giovanili 1914-1918* (*Juvenalia*: Turin, 1958), p. 176.
6. The work Pasolini refers to is the *Dizionario moderno, supplemento ai dizionari italiani . . . storia, etimologia e filosofia delle parole* (*Modern Dictionary, Supplement to Italian Dictionaries . . . History, Etymology and Philosophy of Words*: Milan, 1905). Gramsci cites it in "La lingua unica e l'esperanto," p. 176.
7. Those within a country who speak another language than the official, national tongue.
8. In an Italian newspaper the third page is traditionally the page devoted to cultural affairs.
9. See Introduction, p. xv, for a discussion of Gramscian hegemony.
10. Pasolini blames the three figures, who represent diverse points of view, for not seeing that media are culturally dependent rather than autonomous institutions.
11. *Qualunquismo* was originally a right-wing political movement and party of the postwar 1940s that claimed to express the views of the ordinary man (*uomo qualunque*), and which asserted that government would function better without political parties. Pasolini uses the word in its later, more general meaning of indifference to political and social issues.

The response of Citati on the "new question" of the [Italian] language seems useful to me for two reasons: (a) it brings the discussion back to the reality of observation, beyond all the "delayed" experiences that everyone who participates in the debate demonstrates having; (b) it gives an elucidation of the word "communicativeness."

Let us begin with point a. Linguistic observers don't exist in Italy, not even, I believe, in the specialized journals—none that regularly, systematically, intensely, present themselves as sociolinguistic surveys, and, with the punctuality of weather bulletins which say "what the weather is," say "what the language is." Citati in his article—pessimist that he is concerning generalizations and ideologizations of themes—gives an excellent "lingualogic" report (let us invent another horrible term!): "what is the language" in a train on the Rome-Milan or Naples-Turin line? With the ear of a bitter and depressed linguist, Citati has gathered very important material: the crazy talk of a traveling companion (his syntax fractured, his connectives broken, his *cursus* stuck together—inextricable, without a break—his "yesses" replaced by an atrocious "exactly" with teeth bared)—and he proposes it as an ideal example of the real Italian that is spoken today. It's true, Citati is right. While the "new national Italian" cries feebly¹ in the business firms of the North, ordinary Italian, the dialectized common tongue, and the avalanche of jargons—from the literary to the criminal—continue their development through inertia. And the history of the growth of the national Italian that I have indicated is the history of the relationship between the new technological stratification, as unifying and modifying principle of Italian, with all these preceding stratifications and all these types of still-living languages.

The linguistic *monstrum*[†] that the ears of Citati have picked up with the precision of a scientific apparatus is a moment of this evolutionary phase, and the Italian that is really spoken today in Italy is a feeble "cry": its base is that of average literary Italian,

* *Il Giorno*, March, 1965. [The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

† Monstrous or highly unusual phenomenon.—Ed.

adopted by the bourgeoisie as a kind of lingua franca; the archetype—above all syntactic—is Latin; the primary sociopolitical center of diffusion is the bureaucracy; the real center of irradiation the “infrastructures of the base” (and, more recently, the new type of urbanism of internal migrations): the anthropological base is humanistic, etc., etc. However, there is something new with respect to an analogous discourse heard in the third-class railway carriages of the slow trains of the 1940s and also of the 1950s: a new social model for the humble speaker of the South, or at any rate for the person belonging to the Johnny-come-lately stratifications of the humble Italy: the proletarian of the North becomes bourgeois through the possession of new types of consumer goods and a new linguistic level that expresses such possession. The spirit of “exactness,” of “functional communication,” has insinuated itself into the Latin archetype, and being exactly the opposite of Latin—that is, possessing a profoundly nominal syntax of progressive sequences—it makes Latin syntax absurd, laden as it is with competing forms, allocutory possibilities, and subordination.

The same is true of the Italian of Moro, which I have chosen as an example of the homologizing and unifying action exercised by technology on political language, which Moravia has criticized in *Espresso*. At an infinitely higher level, even the “political language” of Moro presents itself as one of the first “feeble cries” of the nascent Italian: certainly in the Italian of Moro his humanistic formation, the Latin ideal, etc., etc., persists. But, here too, in this formation and in this ideal a new type of language insinuates itself with greater evidence and greater awareness; this language of production and consumption—and not the language of man—appears as implacably deterministic. It only wants to communicate functionally; it doesn't want to perorate or exalt or convince—advertising slogans see to all that.

It is here that we have to go on to point b: to the elucidation of the word “communicativeness.”

I said in the essay that provoked this debate that the new technical stratification—owed to a new spirit, that of technology—which does not have equivalents in the past—and which is getting ready to form the new type of man—modifies and ratifies all the types of languages of the Italian *koinè*² in the sense of communication, to the detriment of expressiveness. Such expressiveness derived from the fact that Italian was fundamentally literary, that is, outside of history, and therefore tended to conserve in a sort of expressive empyrean all its historic stratifications which did not have the sociopolitical power to be overcome and annulled.

Now, for the first time, at least virtually and hypothetically

(Marxism and the working class must be taken into account), such sociopolitical power exists, and therefore, for the first time—at least theoretically—the new linguistic stratification is in a position to overcome the others and to level Italian.

I also said in the reply cited by *Il Giorno* that while in other linguistically united nations the technological spirit presents itself as evolutionary (at least apparently: in reality Citati himself testifies to violent linguistic shocks also in France and in the United States), in Italy it presents itself as revolutionary insofar as it coincides with the formation of a (at least potentially) hegemonic class.

The first act that I could therefore suppose was a strong tendency of Italian toward communication, by analogy with languages which had had a unitary, national experience before Italian, owing to the presence of a hegemonic class identifying itself with the entire nation (monarchies, the haute bourgeoisies).

However, what for other nations has been an experience lasting centuries—which now has also been overwhelmed by the “mutation” of society on the way to technocratic neocapitalism—will probably be one which Italy will have to race through in a few years or decades. In the very moment in which Italian begins to become “communicative” in the sense of classical linguistic descriptions (France, England, etc.), following the destiny of the entire capitalist world it moves almost immediately to the new type of “communicativeness,” precisely that of the technological technocracies (to that madly deterministic “industrial eternity,” which with the cycle of production-consumption, as Moravia says, tends to become the substitute for “natural eternity”).

Now, the linguistic communicativeness of a still-humanistic industrialization was communication in a, let us say, philosophical sense, and expressiveness itself was only an expressive “communication,” a movement of feelings after all. The “communicativeness” of the world of applied science, of industrial eternity, presents itself instead as strictly practical. And therefore monstrous. No word will have a sense that is not functional within the province of necessity: the autonomous expression of a “gratuitous” sentiment will be inconceivable (certainly the entire bourgeoisie, including the “haute bourgeoisie,” has always been badly disposed toward confession, sincerity, lack of pretextuality, violence, and verbal inappropriateness; and its ideal of behavior and therefore of language has always been strictly conformistic). Linguistic determinism will thus be the characteristic of technological communicativeness. Such a communicativeness seems monstrous to us, and, in its own way—Citati is right—expressive! But our point of view, behind the last bastions of the classical world, is convenient; and the horror of

technological communicativeness presents itself as expressive only if put in contact with our old idea of communication and expressiveness.

.....

Notes

1. The word translated here as "cries feebly," *vagisce*, refers to a newborn baby's cry, in keeping with Pasolini's idea that a national Italian language is just now being born.
2. *Koinè* is Greek for the common language.

In my pages on "New Linguistic Questions," the linguistic investigation assured a certain diagnostic objectivity that appeared to many people to be impartiality without any future prospects; while it was clear, it seemed to me—above all from the conclusions, which were actually emphatic—that it was only a preface to some possible hypotheses on the work of tomorrow (from the "summit of our historicocultural experiences," I said, "even if perhaps relived as disappointment," or, I add, however they are reelaborated in the new enterprise or commitment of the "renewal of Marxism").¹

Rendered explicit or considered implicit, accepted or eliminated, the political background of those pages of mine acted profoundly on the responses, making them, even involuntarily, pretextual. Everyone defended their positions on the assumption that they were being attacked. The bourgeois did not want to accept the fact that the evolution of the capitalist world might lead to the monstrosity of a "communication" of the alienated on the linguistic plane; moreover, belonging to *élites* that were users of traditional languages in various ways, they felt themselves offended by the unpoetic "ugliness" of the technological stratification. Therefore they have not even asked themselves if my theses might or might not be credible.

But the Communists, too, have felt that their position of "tendentially hegemonic force" (hegemonic, therefore, also culturally and linguistically) was menaced: without taking into account *that it is exactly in the name of real future possibilities of such a hegemonic force that I was speaking*.² But naturally, beyond every direct interest, every possible government control, every tactic, every party honor.

The linguistic question places the PCI[†] in front of the necessity of verifying the real potentiality and the real objectives of its struggle for hegemony. This is the true subject that the PCI must confront, and to confront it truly it must *concede*—without fear of offending its own honor or of admitting at the same time some insufficiency of its own in the past or the present—that there is the possibility, or the danger, that "the new technological stratification" belongs in fact to the (potentially) hegemonic class of the new bourgeoisie. The fact

* *Rinascita*, March 6, 1965. [The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

† Acronym for the Italian Communist Party.—Ed.

that all of us, that is, the entire nation, can be "users" of this technological language—understood, I insist, as a new spirituality or culture—does not exclude that the real possession of that language may belong to those who express their real existence through it.

For us—and understood generically, almost in an anthropomorphic way, for the PCI—technological language is one of many expressive elements, whatever its tendency may be, while for the technocratic-neocapitalistic bourgeoisie it is a single entity. In a quasi-metaphysical or universalistic sense, technological language can be understood as the language of industrial eternity (according to a definition of Moravia). In fact, hypothetically, a world completely occupied at the center by the production-consumption cycle would be entirely conceivable, [a world] *that had only the language of technology as its language*: all other languages could be tranquilly regarded as "superfluous" (or as folkloristic remnants in slow extinction). Why, in a world such as we are able to imagine it, schematically, at the limit of technocratic development, must there be other languages, or different linguistic moments beyond that of production and consumption? Yes, I repeat, they are conceivable; but as "pastime languages," as "domestic hobbies." Yes, but still hypothetically, we imagine that free time as occupied by man as we know him, and we presuppose the presence of a family that we have experienced. While in the ultimate and apocalyptic vision of industrial eternity as reproduction of the determinism of nature, man will be something else: and his linguistic "communication" will no longer be traditionally human in function. . . .

Naturally I am joking. But admitting that there may be some truth in this simplification, it follows that technological language as the typical and necessary language for technocratic capitalism contains within itself a nonhumanistic, inexpressive future. Instead, technological language as a specialized and elliptical "part" of Marxism contains within itself, obviously, a humanistic and expressive future.

To understand and distinguish why such a phenomenon may happen, in what terms it may happen, etc., etc., is one of the fundamental acts of the "renewal of Marxism" if such a renewal, above all for the PCI—which is considered and is in the avant-garde of such an operation—is owed to the appearance of new strata of reality, to the unforeseen development of certain social situations beyond the limit of the provisions of Marx and of Lenin. By now everyone knows this. And the renewal, however, must not happen by means of a rediscovery of Marx, a return to the origins (as the purists of PSIUP* or of certain disinterested movements, for exam-

* Acronym of the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity, which splintered from the Socialist Party in 1964.—Ed.

ple, the group of *Quaderni Piacentini*, tend to do):³ in such a case a renewal of Marxism would be presented as one of the many returns to the Gospel in the history of the Church, and one knows that all such returns are "made part" of the glory of the Church. It is certainly necessary to reread Marx and Lenin, but not as one rereads the Gospel. The "new technological spirit" is a fact without precedents and without equivalents in the past—and it was not foreseeable, because the concrete scientific realizations were not foreseeable, and thus the quality of their quantity was always more immense.

Certainly—as many participants in the debate have noticed—the "scientific spirit" is already a tradition in man and in his language (cf. the always splendid citations of Gadda, present in profusion in the first issue dedicated to the question by *Rinascita-Contemporaneo*):⁴ but what is new is the "technological spirit," that is, the spirit of applied science that tends to substitute its own data for those of nature, and therefore tends to a radical transformation of human habits.

In short, what happens on the sociopolitical plane is reproduced on the linguistic plane in a less dramatic and more easily observable way: as total industrialization is as typical of neocapitalism as of Marxism, so, too, the "language of total industrialization" is typical of both these organizing and ideological forms of man. In what does the distinction consist?

Another thing, before going on to particular examinations of various responses: Citati in *Il Giorno* observed that a "traveling companion" with his teeth showing (his long, Latinizing-bureaucratic sentences upset by a new contradictory spirit: the search for communicative rapidity and precision) tended to substitute for the old, dear, irreplaceable "yes" ("the Beautiful Country where yes is heard") a horrendous "exactly."⁵ This "exactly" is not directly technological, but it is the product of the technological "principle" of clearness, of communicative exactness, of mechanical scientificness, of efficiency, that becomes monstrous in its initial phase of contact with the traditional humanistic and expressive substratum. *The technological influence is indirect: it is its in some way transcendent principle that counts.* Television is one of the modes of concretion and irradiation of such a principle. The word "exactly" was the official cry of triumph with which Mike Bongiorno welcomed the right answer to a quiz question. This is evidently the avenue of prestige of the word "exactly": the deep linguistic model is in the new technological spirit of the industrialized North of Italy up to the possible beginning of the technocratic era, but the immediate model passes through an infrastructural mediation that deforms it and will deform it along an infinity of linguistic phases.

The hypothesis that "exactly" may slowly but surely take the place of "yes" is paradoxically conceivable. And that therefore Italy may slowly but surely become the "Beautiful Country where exactly is heard." What would the PCI have to do with such technological fruit, and what provisions does it mean to take so that its use of technological terminology does not imply responsibility for similar results?

The typical operation of common sense is to defend oneself from uncomfortable novelties by making them pass for the old, to defend oneself against problems by considering them already resolved by nature. There is no need for me to refer to Kant concerning common sense, understood as everything contrary to reason, that is, as the cover of dogmatic assertions. Common sense ("but at bottom there is the Italian language, it is there—a Neapolitan can be understood by a Milanese, etc., etc.") thus disguises dogmas that have fallen to the low level of normal consumption, that have become social ontologies. Not for nothing does Dallamano refer to Stalin in order to slap the reader on the back, winking his eye at him and saying to him: "You and I, old users of the *koinè*, we understand each other; let's go get a glass of wine together (*ombra* in Venetian dialect, *fojetta* in Romanesque, etc., etc.) and let's not think any more about it!" Thus Italian is reduced at home to the historical-cultural level of Swahili (a common language manipulated and diffused by missionaries in East Africa, originating in one of the dialects and now understood in Kenya, Tanganyika, Somalia, by Kikuyu, Ghiriama, Masai, etc., etc.), or worse: here is Italian reduced to a mimetic language through which a Neapolitan, pressing his fingertips together in his typical gesture, but directing them in successive stages to his half-open mouth with an afflicted and interrogative air, makes a Tartar understand that he is hungry.

I am not speaking of Arbasino, who is the "*Corriere della Sera* of common sense,"⁶ but, because of his character, and of the vast ideological halo that this implies, Calvino, too, in the second part of his response, since the first is very good: where it says that Italian is to be studied and diagnosed with an internationalistic and comparative spirit. For that matter, Bally was my own point of departure, that is, from a comparative French-German examination, and I have never ceased to compare the Italian situation with that of other languages—so long as it has been possible to my knowledge and to the center of my thesis. In the second part of his response [Calvino] shrugs his shoulders and assumes the unobtrusive air of someone who does not wish to know anything about it: it's an old story. But in the meantime, even where he speaks of codes (in Italy we use codes or critical jargons that are not understood abroad, etc., and vice versa; in Italy there is a confusion of codes, etc., etc.), he does

not take into account an extremely new and typical fact about the world at whose threshold we find ourselves together—that is, the rapidity of consumption. In “classical” times (by now we can call them that globally!) a “code” could suffice for a lifetime because the consumption of ideas was slow (like the clothes that they used then, often handed down from father to son): now the immensely augmented production of ideas (the quantity of people who produce ideas has grown by millions of times) and the rapidity of circulation burn them up rapidly: and with them they burn their codes. Twenty years ago a Crocian code or a positivist code was enough for an Italian critic; two years ago a stylistic critical code was enough; now at least a structuralist code is needed. But they are certainly not moralistic norms that can provide for the regular and systematic elimination of surviving codes: a period of contemporaneity of codes can never be eliminated. I don’t see why one would have to immediately forget Spitzer for Barthes; and why one need not try instead to use them simultaneously, at least until the natural extinction of the meaningfulness of the former. In short, our heads must adapt themselves to being a marketplace of competing codes as well as grammatical forms.

Now the expression of Calvino lies in his crazy search for communication, in his invention of an Italian [which is] finally clear, limpid, ironic, dazzling, gentle: but he should offer this as a literary rule! The struggle now is for expressiveness, cost what it may. And let not Calvino—and with him the entire Frenchified-rationalistic wing, largely surpassed by the monstrous international presence of, precisely, “franglais,” that is, of technological French and English, by now partially beyond human reason—believe himself able, for example, to set aside dialects. Dialects have declined as problems of the dialect/language relationship because—surpassed by reality—the cultural period in which it was believed that the Italianization of Italy might happen under the sign of equilibrium and joint contributions of the various popular sublanguages (commitment and neo-realism) has declined. They have not declined, however, in another sense: that is, as the “substratum” of the language unified by the technological principle of communication. They will actually be present in the various moments, phases, or linguistic situations through which Italian is about to pass from the moment in which it presents itself as a national language. The health that Calvino ironically says is presupposed in dialects is, however, a currency that has never been in use if not in the vernacular academies bound to the various regional autonomies (neither in the expressionism of Gadda nor in my expressionistic naturalism have dialects ever been imagined with such a ridiculous hygienic halo).⁷

The disagreement that Calvino expresses with my opinion on

journalistic language gives me the pretext for an explanation of a general character. I spoke of a *pseudorationalism* of journalistic language, of its slangy normativity based on a *pseudostatistical* inference of the demands of the public. An absolutely negative judgment, it seems to me. Calvino, why I don't know, finds it positive: hence his disagreement with me. Have I been obscure? Perhaps. Has Calvino read absentmindedly? Perhaps. In any case, this is a fact. I arrived at the apodictic and impartial affirmation that "Italian has been born as a national language" much as a diagnostician is impartial in announcing the presence of an illness. And this appears clear to me precisely because I have reached such an affirmation after a series of completely negative, and even mercilessly negative, analyses (much as a diagnostician perceives an illness through a series of aberrations and dysfunctions). The presence of the "technological principle," as a ratifying and modifying principle, and therefore as nationalizer of Italian, revealed itself to me through its initial, but already aberrant and pathological action on the various types of language which, precisely, have all seemed entirely "negative" to me: the languages of journalism, of television, of advertising, of politics, of the common speech of the North, etc. The final pronouncement is therefore only apparently impartial and objective: the road that I traveled to get there clearly demonstrates, to whoever doesn't read distractedly or with "academic resentment," that my choice and my taste are those of a doctor who loves health and who considers health to be enjoyed by the patient in his normal life, preceding his illness or the symptoms of his illness.

In *Il Giorno* of January 3, 1965, Calvino returns to the problem: and, in order not to say I'm right (*stubborn as a perfect little lieutenant who occupies a position and doesn't want to give it up to the enemy*), first he says that it isn't true that a national Italian language is being born, but that if anything it is dying; that the language of today is an "antilanguage" (*thus called by him because to his ears, those of a perfect little lieutenant, it is aesthetically ugly*). He means, in short, that the real language of today is ugly, that language which the linguistic bulletins don't point out—but which Citati, for example, has pointed out by keeping his ears open in the train; and which Calvino himself perceived very well, entering a police station during the writing up of a statement. But then, he, too, reaches the conclusion, suggested to him by the actual inter-regionality of the automobile lexicon (the spare parts), that "this operative language (that is, as he says, the scientific-technical-industrial interlanguage) will increasingly decide the general destiny of the language."

This is exactly what I was saying! But in order to admit it, Calvino has wanted to formulate the question in his own way. Now all that is

left for him to do is to make an effort as a linguist or sociolinguist *rather than as a man of letters, moody as a thoroughbred horse*, and ask himself whence this technical-communicative "hyperlanguage" may rain down from (the exact adjective would be "signing"),⁸ and with what means and with what strength it may become the pilot language of Italian.

Even Calvino, in short, doesn't accept the substantial politicalness of my thesis. Even Calvino!

The fact is that every one of us men of letters believes himself to be, if not a father, at least an uncle, a brother-in-law, a big brother, a cousin-priest, a mama, a nurse, a godfather, a godmother of Italian: on the order of Dante, the archetype, who is the "father." But let it be very clear that Dante, if we really want to continue to offend him, was "the father of the literary language," not of the "language": and that there is an abyss between the users of vocal signs and the users of graphic signs. Thus, every one of us tends to return doggedly to literature, as if literature were the beginning and the end of every language. And as if the divisions that literature makes between beautiful and ugly words might be in some way normative!

Naive Calvino! None of us men of letters will ever have the direct power to take out of the head of a brigadier of the carabinieri⁹ his particular linguistic selectivity, nor the naive idea of "election" that governs there! No, he doesn't choose death in place of life when he says "I have effected" rather than saying "I have done," as mama taught him to; he performs an act of linguistic selection the same as Bassani performs when he says "I betook myself" rather than "I went," or "I attended" rather than "I waited" (or better, "I have gone" or "I have waited"). However, the model that the brigadier has in his head is single and double: the first, the archetype, is that of the *Latinorum*,* the second, looming closer (from the wall of his bare office), is the State in its specifically governmental manifestation—the bureaucracy.

A third model is being added to these two; it puts them in confusion for now but it has the possibility of modifying them profoundly: it is the model of the hyperlanguage of mechanics: the one which has its home in the business firms of the North, in Milan and Turin. And it is always his idyllic and peevish preeminent idea of himself as a literary figure that makes Calvino fall into the most unexpected error (in the moment in which *he jokingly "attempts" to be a prophet*): the error of seeing the Italian of the future polarized into two languages, an exquisitely technical language and an exquisitely expressive language. This elegant Manicheism is pure madness as a perspective: it is a racist division of human functions! Instead,

*Latin used in an intentionally pedantic and incomprehensible way.—Ed.

the interregional and international "signing" language of the future will be the language of a world unified by industry and technocracy (if Marxism, it's understood, has lost the ways of revolution . . .), and men of letters, being men like others, will undergo the change like everyone else. If, nevertheless, in some marginal area (Don Milani has written a splendid letter to the missionaries who will survive in China *after* the end of the Church in the West), some men of letters as we imagine them today in our humanistic idyll will continue to exist, their "expressive Italian" will be totally without an audience (roughly like the Latin chased out of the churches today).

Moreover, the Italian man of letters has the uncontrollable habit of identifying the oral sign with the written sign and of not conceiving of language as other than literature. A clinical case of attachment to one's own role—and, in some way, a touching symptom of professional timidity. Sereni, too, doesn't know how to imagine the possibility of linguistic discourse outside of his own literary experience: as if—implicitly—literature might actually be the language of a nation. This equivocation is strictly connected to another: the disinterest in the linguistic problem even in its literary manifestation. A subtly boastful disinterest implying, that is—like every provocation—an ontological ideology based on the substantial presumption of the inanity of that problem. Religious and, still subtly, blackmailing agnosticism (compare also Bassani and Morante), for whom it is considered guilty or impure to take language for what it is, that is, an "instrument"; and if in its aspect as *langue* it is thus accepted as a mythic or mystical "gift," in its aspect as *parole* it is completely identified with the inventing I—at a spiritualistic level that is, permit me to say it, in some way too innocent.

I don't understand why Sereni doesn't find a connection between the fact that he doesn't know how to confront the "problem of language" objectively and the fact that he finds it difficult if not impossible to write in prose: these are only two aspects of an unrealistic and uncritical ideology, that is, a surviving product of hermetic inhibition. At the moment in which he crosses the boundary that he has been on the point of crossing for so many years, with the good fortune/bad fortune of his poetry, he will liberate himself, as much as it's possible to liberate oneself—that is, in consciousness—from his madly elegiac youthfulness (and he knows it). The concomitant possibilities of objectifying the linguistic problem and writing in prose will be liberated. Nevertheless, I don't urge him to this. I'm not a moralist at all. Particularly because the "language of poetry" has a course which is diachronic by definition.¹⁰ (And it is only in this diachrony that one can speak of its apparent meta-historic nature.)

Vittorini in his response (as we will see later on) also confronts me

with an Italian language as a language of workers' protest *in its literary manifestation*. That is, he fails to see the literary metaphorization of such a language of struggle (that of itself would present itself as a pathetically oratorical remnant of the typical "expressive" Italian oratory). In such a "metaphoric mimesis" of the discourse of the worker as judge—in the ideally victorious moment of his struggle—Italian, according to Vittorini, would take the place of dialect (which reasonably would have to continue to present itself as the only linguistic instrument of the worker). And in some ways it would be precisely a metaphorically national, or at least national-popular Italian. I deny that such an operation is (a) the only one possible, (b) national. It isn't the only one possible, because the very discourse of "condemnation" or "victory," of the worker-judge, could be drawn up through an antithetical operation, that is, through a dialectal mimesis: in such a case the internal structure of his discourse—not low, not ordinary, not naturalistic—would give dialect the dignity of a language. It is not national, because I deny that a literary work has the possibility of containing a language that objectively is not there. At most, I repeat, a "national-popular" tendency can be found in it; that is, it is therefore national on the aesthetic plane, not on the linguistic one.

And further, moving the objection of Vittorini from the specifically literary area to the vaster area of political struggle, yes, certainly one can speak of a strong contribution that language—originating in the political interpretation of working-class exigency and its participation from the bottom of national life—has given to the Italianization of Italy. But it is a contribution to the construction of a possible unitary base, to the foundations of unity, not to unity.

Here is what I mean: after 1870 the Italian bourgeoisie came to power (taken in tow, as Gramsci observes, by the great European bourgeoisies), adopting literary Italian as its own language, that is, the Italian of the courts.¹¹ It objects to some typical elements of this language and sets them aside. It strips words like *speme* or *vorria*¹² of prestige and removes [them] from use (as Professor Ignazio Baldelli noted in his contribution to the debate). *It objects to and sets aside "agrarian classicism."* But only in order to substitute "*petit-bourgeois classicism*" for it (D'Annunzio and the entire Fascist linguistic election). A question, really, of a thrust from the bottom, corresponding to the broadening of democracy, to the right to vote for all, etc.—immediately withdrawn. The transformation of the Latin model into a bourgeois one through a bureaucratic spirituality and the cult of the bourgeois State were maintained paternalistically until the bourgeoisie had the nation solidly in hand: with the first wave of industrialization they became authoritative, and the Travets discovered the classical world.¹³

Free indirect discourse as resistance culture

A new "thrust from the bottom," really democratic and popular this time, came at this moment with the Resistance. And, from the linguistic point of view, what has been its first operation? *That of objecting to and setting aside the "petit-bourgeois classicism" of Fascism.* After "hope" and "wished," words like "augur" and "radiant" have come crashing down. This thrust from the bottom, composed of pure content, has had two types of linguistic interpretation: one literary and one political. The literary interpretation has consisted in a discovery of the real and peripheral, popular and dialectal Italy. On this level the commitment of the postwar period came true concretely—as I have repeated many times. In practice, from a linguistic point of view, in literary works it has consisted of a series of inserts of "direct discourses" (all of neorealism, with its "tape recordings"), and in a series of "free indirect discourses" (all of expressionistic naturalism) by means of which the author always finished by speaking, completely or in part, through the language of his popular and dialectal protagonist. It was the only concrete and possible way—under the category of epicness that the objectivity implicit in Marxist ideology guaranteed—to apply to literature the Gramscian idea of the national-popular: the concurrence of two points of view in looking at the world, that of the Marxist intellectual and that of the ordinary man, united in a "blending" of the "sublime style" and the "humble style."

The politician, too, in his speeches, in his meetings, in his articles, performed the same operation: he entered into the mind of the worker or farmer, gathered the contents of [their] dissent, protest, and revolution, and expressed them by translating them into a language that, if it was not physically popular, was not classicist either. It was scientific. Because Marxist ideology guarantees a fundamentally scientific spirit in language. (In such a sense the "division" of cultures typical of Western countries, identified and vulgarized by Snow, does not exist in Italy where the culture that counts is fundamentally Marxist.¹⁴

This is why I have cited Moro, and not Togliatti or Pajetta in speaking of the language of politicians, in which the new technological spirit pushes toward communication—wrenching it away from the bogus expressiveness of Latinized Italian. These last two had already made the qualitative leap that the forward-looking Christian Democrats are making today.¹⁵ It is true that the socialist tradition is bourgeois, and that many strata of the bureaucratic language pad the prose of Communist speakers and columnists. It is also true that many scholastic-Latinizing recrudescences explode in moments of emotion and peroration: nevertheless, the totality of the discourse of a Communist, as the expression of a profound and vast thrust from the bottom, and as shaped by a fundamentally

scientific spirit, tends to a synthesis of Italian and is posited as fundamentally communicative.

The whole of the linguistic or sociolinguistic phenomenon that has characterized postwar Italy (the thrust of the contents from the bottom, and their national-popular or committed interpretation in literature, their scientific interpretation in politics) has contributed to create a vast unitary base, ready to welcome the complete Italianization of Italy across the democratic enlargement guaranteed by the presence of the great working-class parties. This was the road that appeared good and unique to all of us: and on it shone the star of the Communist dream of hegemony. The facts have brutally led us to reality. That democratic and popular road of Italianization has undergone a violent deflection: a new phenomenon, the nascent technocracy, still without the consciousness and perhaps without the will of hegemony, is in fact taking it [this road]. [This technocracy] no longer challenges the various possible classicisms: it brutally eliminates them without ideologizing the elimination. It substitutes its communicative efficiency and that's all. *In reality what it tends to contest and to get rid of is the entire classical and classicist past of man: that is, humanism.*

There is something fundamental in its [technocracy's] presence: therefore, practically, if we Marxists claim our contribution to the unification of the base of Italy, through the expressive and political liberation of the popular classes, we must also admit to having worked for the enemy. The nascent hegemony, blindly pragmatic, deprived of will and consciousness like a force of nature, finds the ground already leveled to diffuse its antihumanistic spirit in its "signing" language (not everywhere: since the unequal are still many, Italy is still full of Gods).

The proud optimism of Vittorini is a temptation. So are his ironic cautions. He speaks of the improbability of this unitary (national) Italian for which I've stood godfather, since "work relationships" would still not guarantee its unity.

But in the meantime an error in which many of my friends participating in this debate have fallen must be kept in mind: that is, to assume as present and adult an Italian language that I assume to be newborn and potential. And for this reason, then, they don't recognize it.

Certainly the "work relationships" in the South do not guarantee the unitariness of Italian, since in the South dialects remain in the circle of a "rural language": that is, they belong to the classical world (agricultural, artisan, feudal at first, then bourgeois) to which the capitals of that rural world belong—Palermo, Naples, Rome. But how is this "rural" world positioned (or better, how does it *begin* to be positioned, or how is it positioned potentially) in the unitary Italian world? As a "surviving culture." Exactly the way every classi-

cal rural world is positioned in an epoch in which agriculture is about to be industrialized. If twenty years ago I saw a farmer from the South—in my ignorance as a classicized Italian, and lacking in critical experience of the capitalistic world—I could think of his condition as “eternal.” If I see him today, I understand that he is about to disappear. In Ragusa (ENI), in Taranto (the steel industry), he is right at the point of disappearing, after a very violent crisis owed to the clash within the same spirit between illiteracy and specialization, between Bourbon anarchy and membership in CGIL.¹⁶

But today we are in a transitory phase: the relationship between the North and the South is no longer colonial but neocolonial. In the “work relationship” between a southern farmer and the land (the trees, the plough) there is a diaphragm, the consciousness of another type of relationship, that his son, an emigrant to Milan or Turin, already realizes and lives. In this diaphragm, in this light, messianic alteration of the relationship of work with the land, is the beginning of real national unity. Moreover, all the “Third World,” which is a classical and petit-bourgeois rural world, therefore (as both Marx and Lenin said) presents itself today as a world of the future, not of the past. That diaphragm, that alteration are aspects of the dynamics that impel ex-slave populations, agricultural subproletariats, tribes toward a kind of synthesis, *in a scandalously dialectical relationship* with the rationality of industrialized countries and with Marxism.

Now, for a really “rational” participation in the dialogue about language, according to the thought of Gramsci, it is necessary to have the courage to look reality in the face. Marxism doesn’t know, or knows badly, how to insert itself in this “scandalously dialectical” relationship between the petit-bourgeois rural irrationalism of the Third World (the Italian South is included here) and liberal capitalistic rationalism. Such an insertion, it is clear, implies above all a rehabilitation of internationalism and an overcoming of a certain recent tradition of the “national roads to socialism.” But all this, nevertheless, does not mean conveniently leaving aside concrete particularisms: for example, dialects and little national languages *must be put as new problems, not as old problems* (politically: the relationship of Sicily to the Milan-Turin axis in a neocapitalistic context with Marxist opposition, or the relationship of the Slovaks with the Czechs or the Transylvanians with the Roumanians in a socialist context).

We would be tiresome post-Stalinists, on the other hand, if we did not admit to ourselves that if a violent reversal of the situation doesn’t come about, both at the ideological and philosophical level and at the level of political praxis, the immediate future of Italy will be characterized by a technocratic industrialization, and in such a

context the struggle takes shape, even though still chaotically, between conservative forces (Milanese liberalism, no longer Neapolitan) and labor forces (the center-left).

The PCI and the PSI have been able to adopt the standard language of the bourgeoisie (on the Dantean side . . .) so long as this bourgeoisie was a dominant and archaic class, that is, the user of a deeply irrational Franco-literary Italian language as a "*res communis omnium*":* but in the moment in which such a class "tends" to become hegemonic (still outside its consciousness and its will) the linguistic relationship must change, and everyone must accept his responsibilities.

The "international" language of which Vittorini speaks (with a certain optimism) is instead itself the language of the new forms of capitalism, and it is through the new forms of Italian capitalism that we perceive it and begin to adopt it. Such an international language has nothing to do with English as we are accustomed to hearing it, but it is what produces the horrors (to our humanistic ears) of a new language in which civil and philosophical communicativeness and human and poetic expressiveness are surpassed by "sign-system communication": that is, by a communication of men no longer men. Monstrously expressive, in its way!

Well then: the immensity of the implications of the sociopolitical problem perhaps makes it so that it may become abstract to define it under the rubric of an explicitly sociopolitical response. But on the specific problem of the language (it isn't the sentence "the Beautiful Country where exactly sounds" that seems monstrous and unrecognizable to us, but the sociopolitical implication, the "spirit" that said it), the PCI could attempt a criticism of itself and a verification of its own revolutionary relationship to an evolving reality. It is a problem, that of language, that is not found in the "decisory" zone (as Moro would say), at least apparently: and yet it is there that can be outlined the principles of the "reinsertion" of Marxism into the Italian reality of today, which tends—in a brutal conception of the world that "is made" pragmatically, almost without theoretical, if not pretextual or mythological, reflection—to push it to the limits, or to leave it behind. This is the real problem. No one feels the need for a new linguistic *querelle*.

Notes

1. Pasolini describes the "renewal of Marxism" as "probably the most relevant and determinant cultural fact of the sixties" in "An Article in *L'Espresso*," p. 24.

*The common property of all.—Ed.

2. See Introduction, p. xv, for a discussion of the Marxist term "hegemony."
3. *Quaderni Piacentini* (1962-), a journal of the New Left, critical of the PCI, published in Piacenza.
4. In 1965 these two Communist journals merged.
5. See "Another Article," p. 32, for Pasolini's first discussion of Citati's observations. Pasolini cites Dante, *Inferno* 33: 80, a celebrated description of Italy.
6. The expression is the equivalent of saying the "impartial arbiter of good sense."
7. Pasolini refers to his own Friulian dialect poetry and Romanesque novels. As he indicates, there is a fundamental difference between his use of dialect and Gadda's: for Gadda dialect is one element in a highly individualistic literary language; for Pasolini it is a language that he wishes to establish in mainstream literature in its own right.
8. The adjective *segnalatico*, which ordinarily means "characteristic" or "descriptive," in Pasolini's usage seems to reflect the noun *segnalatica*, "system of signs"; hence "signing," the making of signs.
9. *Carabinieri* are Italy's national paramilitary police force. Pasolini uses a *carabiniere* as an example of an ordinary uneducated man.
10. The terms "synchrony" and "diachrony" became widely diffused with Saussurean linguistics, but Pasolini's use is more directly derived from Roman Jakobson. See his "Principles of Historical Phonology," in *Selected Writings I* (The Hague, 1962), 202-20.
11. Italy was unified in 1870 under Victor Emmanuel II, King of Piedmont, Savoy, and Sardinia.
12. *Speme* and *vorria* are archaic forms of *speranza* (*hope*) and *I would like*, respectively.
13. Originally the surname of a clerk in the Piedmontese dialect comedy *Le miserie d'Monsu Travet* (1863) of Vittorio Bersezio (1828-1900), Travet came to refer to any dogged exemplar of the bureaucratic mentality.
14. C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959).
15. Closely identified with the Catholic Church, the centrist Christian Democrats have been Italy's majority party since the formation of the post-World War II republic.
16. CGIL is the acronym for the Communist-dominated General Confederation of Italian Workers; ENI for the National Organization of Hydrocarbons. Ragusa is a city in the southern part of Sicily; Taranto a southern city of the Italian mainland.

FROM THE LABORATORY
(Notes *en poète* for a Marxist Linguistics)

1) All the youthful pages of Gramsci are written in an ugly Italian. Gramsci was not precocious; he passed through all the phases typical of a Southern youth Italianized in Turin. The maternal contributions were those strictly particular to Sardinia, the paternal ones were an Italianization of the Roman country man, of a father employed by the State; Gramsci's childhood and first adolescence are of the rural environment, and Italian must have sounded like a foreign language to the non-Italophonic Sardinians of Ghilarza (who were probably in a closer relationship with America than with Italy); Gramsci must have heard his first Italian resound in the mouths of those "self-styled" professors of letters who taught at the private high school of Santu Lussurgiu. And, given that they had to demonstrate their diplomas even if it wasn't asked for, it must have been a continual and caricature-like attempt at the approximation of purity and emphatic humanism. Gramsci, branded a poor boy, lived and interiorized every event of his childhood deeply, so much so that for his entire life he had to experience his dedication as an ignominy and an impediment. He must therefore have profoundly absorbed even this first official Italian, which represented culture, liberation. In fact, all his writings, until *New Order*,¹ in part, carry like a brand that absurd acquisition, that false liberation.

It seems impossible that a man like Gramsci was not able to shake off immediately that language incapable of expressing anything other than feelings. It seems, in short, that a man pledged to rationality as Gramsci was would suddenly have had to get rid of the emphatic expressiveness of literary Italian by means of the very presence of his vocation. But from 1914 to part of 1919, his language is only capable of grasping the sentimental or passionate moment in its ideas: with some intensity of the typical *vociano*² irrationalism, in the best cases, which are very rare; moreover, that language is completely humanistic on the romantic "side," probably because humanism was directly and tumultuously translated from the protosocialistic humanitarianism that was the most immediate linguistic ascendancy which Gramsci might reasonably look to (and which he would have never forgotten: because it is probably to it, mythicized and purified, that Gramsci perhaps unconsciously referred when he thought of a possible language of Communist hegemony; and in any case it is to such a language of Marxist

humanism, reinforced by the spirit of the Resistance, that many politicians of today still refer as to a possible hegemonic language of Communism). It is necessary to fortify oneself with the patience of the philologists and to resort to all the love that a figure such as Gramsci inspires in order to be able to read his writings of those five years.

The first kind of language that causes the expressive-humanitarian emphasis of the young Gramsci to decline is the language of science: that is, a non-Italian language (above all, in those years). For this reason a Frenchifying phase follows a first emphatic-humanistic phase (that of every fine young southerner who travels up through Italy). Moreover, not by chance is the city of his Italianization Turin. And, in the Frenchifying phase, the tradition of Turinese culture certainly matters, although the principal fact is the direct reading of original "texts" of the new cultural phase. The French influence, acting on a linguistic body so fragile, inconsistent, and empty as the Italian of Gramsci was, once more had extreme and dramatic effects. Not so much through the presence of direct Frenchisms, as through the insecurity that the communicative and scientific French imparts to the expressive and irrationalistic Italian. In two pages of the Gramsci of 1919 I can underline the words and expressions: "terrorized," "mobilized," "irrevocable devastations," "it is not generated through our political action" (where "through" stands for "because of"), "endless communities of pain and expectation," "services." Not to speak of a word that is forever turning up: namely, "workshop" instead of "factory" (which begins to prevail from 1919 on).

It is only with *New Order*, that is, with the first maturation of an original Gramscian thought through experiences lived as his own (and timidity always pushed Gramsci to live impersonally), that his language first begins to become possible, then in some way absolute.

But the primitive clumsiness of the timid schoolboy, who makes the jokes and word-plays of a cultivated professor, with Latin citations, etc., will reappear—always less frequently—every time Gramsci gives "written form" to a feeling rather than an idea, or to the aura and to the sentimental shuffling of the idea (therefore, very often in polemics and invectives).

Gramsci had conquered the irrationality of the literary language adopted from the Italian bourgeoisie along with unity by means of a long and almost religious apprenticeship to rationality, so that every time he had to express a thought, language vanished and the thought shone through. Perhaps, coldly analyzed, leaving out of consideration what it says, such a language can still appear ugly to a purist, to a sensitive linguist: that is, humbled by its compilatory greyness, its political jargon, its language of translations, its unforgettable profes-

sional and Frenchified background. But all that is rendered irrelevant by the functionality that makes it in some way absolute. When instead a remnant of the old irrationality, compressed and subdued, is discovered, Gramsci—who had not trained himself to dominate it linguistically—became its prey, and his language falls again into the casualness and emphasis of his first schoolboy pages. Only in the letters from prison, toward the end of his life, does he succeed in bringing together irrationality and the exercise of reason; but still, it isn't a question of the irrationality that haloes or follows the reason of political thought as through a sentimental impulse or polemic rage. Because in such a case irrationality always hides ideological insufficiency, the lack of a deductive connection.

And in fact from his youth Gramsci hid the gaps of political inexperience, or, more precisely, the gaps in the socialism to which he adhered, within the expressive casualness of his Italian.

It's a question, rather, toward the end of his life, of giving voice to a tale or evocation of even the most humble and casual facts of life, to just that amount of the mysterious and irrational that every life has in abundance and which is the "natural poetic quality" of life. Then the rationalistic habit that dominated his language without his realizing it, in contact with that dominated irrational element (no longer a lack of connections or an absence of reason, but a mystery that reason recognizes), is colored by a pathos that, who knows through what miraculous osmosis or unconscious reciprocity that comes from the depths of a language, brings to mind certain passages of Umberto Saba, moving but lucid, and always kept low key:

No, communism
will not obscure beauty and grace!

2) I have asked myself at this point what might have been the spoken language of Gramsci.

I inquired of Terracini (from whom I had just heard a commemoration of his friend, done in a style that the Saba of the *Short Cuts and Little Tales* or of the *Autobiography* would have envied, and in a spoken Italian with a profoundly dialectal structure, it is true, with diagrams of mysterious, and yet efficient and intense, provenance), who answered me with what I was expecting, neither more nor less.

Writing, Gramsci certainly used a very "spoken" Italian: the technicisms were still of a political provenance, in that they were terms of Marxist science. But such technicisms, one knows, are inter-professional (so to say), except for certain trade unionisms that require specialization. There are also emphatic passages in Gramsci, as we have seen: however, from a non-Italian emphatic tradition—

the Italian tradition was producing D'Annunzio in those times. And we know the *oral* equivalent of such a centralistic (Dannunzian) tradition: the survivors of nationalism still use it (at least they used it up until two or three years ago), together with—for example—the top graduates of the army, keeping the “diction” of aestheticizing authoritarianism alive until the sixties. It is a question of a particular “artificial pronunciation” born simultaneously with that [artificial pronunciation] of the theater.

(Naturally I am feeling my way almost in a void: a series of documents [recordings] to consult or to enclose with my pages doesn't exist. Italians have never been phonologists! If there is some recording, by chance, it doesn't go back before the year of the invention of tape recorders. Little [evidence] with respect to the “continuum” of the spoken Italian language, even if we want to interest ourselves in such a tradition from the years of Italian unification on.)

Gramsci, when speaking, thus used simultaneously two spoken languages or two oral linguistic traditions in diachrony.

When he read his writing aloud, on one hand he pronounced the written words orally, which were presented as such to the listener (whose ears, in such a case, were a mediation to present the words to the visual imagination as written words); on the other hand, he aligned phonemes according to diagrams, accentuations, voice supports, etc., etc., so that they stood in a purely formal relationship of coexistence with that written language: like poor relatives dressed in the clothes of rich relatives.

The three fundamental elements of the Italian pronunciation of Gramsci—that is, the pronunciation of the Sardinian dialect, the pronunciation of the Piedmontese dialect, the pronunciation of the bureaucratic-professional Italian petite bourgeoisie that had begun to create *an also oral koinè*³ for itself around the oral Florentine canon—are all elements of Gramsci on a level immensely inferior to that of the “written language” (Hegel and Marx, the most advanced French culture, a deep and in its way perfect reading of the Italian classics, etc., etc.).

The uncertainty, the poverty, the misery, the lack of precision of Gramsci's spoken language (like that of every Italian man of culture from then to today) are not proportional to the self-assuredness, to the richness, to the absoluteness of many of his written pages.

3) The contrary also happens: I have never heard recordings of Duse or Petrolini: I don't know if they would please me or not, but I am disposed to admit the principle that their recitations were fascinating, even when the written text was second-rate. In this case the diachrony between written language and spoken language serves

to disguise the written language, to mystify it, to present it for what it isn't, etc., etc. (Even Mussolini invented a notable spoken language for himself: indeed, the system of meanings which he referred to cannot be easily rebuilt through the visual reading of his speeches; it is much more easily [rebuilt] through the reading of [his] recordings. However, even there there is the presence of two diachronous languages.)

Saba read his poems wonderfully (here we have the documents, that is, the recordings): the pathos, both modest and shameless, with which he spoke his own words entrusted to the mysterious means of metrical locomotion of his pedestrian hendecasyllables is an extraordinary phenomenon of "theater." The structural elements of such a diction are two: the pronunciation of Trieste, local almost to the point of the ridiculous (the *fasista abièto*),⁴ and a particular "cadence" of his melodic register, a particular idea of the patterns of accent of the sentence pronounced. (Such a particular idea is probably of Slavic origin. There are selections that Evtushenko reads in the same way with an entirely different character, pathos, etc., etc., etc. I believe that Saba may have influenced Noventa and Levi, and, through them, Bassani and Garboli on one hand, Vigorelli on the other, etc., etc. In short, there is an entire particularistic tradition of "professionals" who have marked their diction with a vague and remote Slavic stamp: it would seem to be a matter of a tradition that is recent but quite widespread and rooted by now in Italian literary circles [which is opposed to the diction of the actors of RAI or tv].)⁵

A series of Slavic cadences can also be traced in Communist political speeches. Above all, in lists (of things, of facts or confirming elements) and in clauses. The psychological element that plays in this oral mimesis of Russian speech in the definition of situations, intonations of the sentence, trochaic rhythm of the final beat, etc., is—above all—a type of emphasis that is not found in the Italian tradition; it's an emphasis of the humanitarian, messianic, prophetic, and profoundly moralistic type (as the puritan peasant peoples are moralists). An emphasis, however, that is not completely accepted by the orator, out of fear, almost, that it may be taken for another emphasis, or for mere emphasis (which is typical, in Italy, of the rhetorical, sensuous, legalistic bourgeoisie, etc., etc.), and therefore it is darkened and repressed as much as possible. From the humble participant at a provincial political meeting (of any province, but especially of the North: indeed, it can be said that fundamentally the Slavic graph passes through Turin), to an intellectual when he speaks in public, to Ingraio, to Alicata, even to Togliatti, all use within their oral phrasing—above all if it's improvised—a series of analogous stresses and defenses; and especially, I repeat, the

Slavic cadence comes out recognizably enough in the lists and clauses of their sentences. Notice how often improvised sentences end with the words "of our country" (which would be Italy, but this name is withheld because of modesty, since [it is] *in itself* rhetorical, or because of reserve, since [it] implies a non-national-popular nationalism). Now this "our country" is pronounced this way, with a strong vocal emphasis on the accents: "ofow-urcoun-try."

4) Good, well then? These are only observations of usage, either a bit more or a bit better. But my ambition here isn't great; in fact the program of these pages of mine was initially that of challenging the essay on the language of Stalin, and I therefore find myself at the crossroads, on the line of the current cultural-political debate. Between phonation and audition I have placed problems that do not exist for phonetics: let us suppose the entirely theoretical necessity of a "linguistic atlas" of the dialectalizations of the spoken *koinè*. But Italians have never been aware of any linguistic atlas that concerns them: the petite bourgeoisie always confronted even the problem of its language *sub specie aeternitatis*. If the "study of the sounds of the word" is neglected in our country, the "study of the sounds of the language" is still more so. It would be necessary, in short, for the ghosts of those phonologists come down from old Prague into our a-Saussurean circle to see and to say what the Italian phonic system is, if there is one; if that officially notarized act—Florentine phonation—works, or in what way it forms a "real" phonic "structure" intersecting and mixing itself with the disparate particularistic phonations, etc., etc.⁶ (What are the particularities of a phonic image that belong to distinctive opposites—and form that "joint whole of functional opposites" that would be language—with which Italian phonemes coincide, if on the one hand—and *not* using dialect, *but* [using] the national linguistic institution—one says "roza," "tempo," "tè," and on the other hand one says "rosa," "dembo," "té"?)

If, then, "a phoneme is not required to be in strict conformity with the phoneme most commonly used by the linguistic community, but to be sufficiently differentiated from other phonemes used by whoever is speaking"—a linguistic freedom that Italians enjoy through lack of an alternative, that is, as slavery—up to what point are these signs socially demarcated, up to what point does the phonetic word coincide with the grammatical word? (The legend is absolute coincidence—yes, but for the Florentines alone, perhaps, and not even, given, for example, the aspirations: in half of Italy one writes "tempo" and one says, roughly, "dembo," etc., etc.)

These are not the problems of my notes. Nevertheless, from what

I have said poorly, without proofs, other than the possible verifiability of my observations (I am not a phoneticist or a phonologist), it can follow that:

a) *We Italians concretely live the tendency of a structure to be another structure; we live its movement of modification by means of its internal will to modify itself.*

That is, the phonic institution, the "real structure" of our phonation, is always that of a dialectized *koinè*: my "joint phonetic whole" anticipates "roza," "tempo," "tè," among my "functional opposites"—there is no resonant "s" between two vowels, etc. Still, I live the tendency of this my "real structure" to conform itself to other "real structures" (for example, given that I am a resident of Rome, to certain usages of Roman phonation), or, and above all, to conform itself to a possible national linguistic institution—the notorious cultivated Florentine. My language doesn't therefore consist of a stable structure, but lives this restlessness in motion, the need of metamorphoses of a structure that wants to be another structure.

But I will come back to this in a later paragraph, no longer taking off from the general observations of someone lacking in expertise, but from a concrete experience lived as an author, and thus with somewhat greater reliability.

b) The contradiction in question—violent, substantial, philosophical—between spoken language and written language—that, from what I know, and perhaps I'm mistaken, linguists have taken into consideration only in laboratory procedures—[is] almost a minor episode, for the convenience of study. If a phonologist is interested in phonation (by means of recordings, that is, studying the language as something which happens and is spread out in time), he keeps in mind a radical and profound unity of this with written language (which is spread out and happens out in space). It seems to me—and in Italy we live this drama radically—that there is a collision between spoken language and written language that exists between two different and opposed structures. Certain phenomena—not only linguistic—are put into effect and understood only by considering the spoken language as a language in itself that only casually and episodically *also* becomes written.

5) On a summer morning in 1941 I stood on the external wooden balcony of my mother's house. The sweet and strong sun of Friuli beat down on all that dear rustic stuff. On my eighteen-year-old beatnik head of the 1940s; on the worm-eaten wood of the stairs and the balcony placed against the granular wall that went from the courtyard to the granary: to the big room. The courtyard, even in the deep intimacy of the sunshine, was a kind of private street, because, going back to the years before my birth, the Petron family had right

of way there; their house was there, illuminated by its sun, a little more mysterious, behind a gate of wood even more worm-eaten and venerable than that of the balcony; and, always in the heart of that sun which belonged to other people, one glimpsed the dunheaps, the tub, the beautiful weeds that surround the meadows—and far away, in the distance, if you craned your neck, as in a painting of Bellini were the foothills of the Alps, blue and unbroken. What did one talk about before the war, that is, before everything happened and life showed itself for what it is? I don't know. There were speeches, certainly, of more or less pure and innocent affabulation. People, before being what they really are, *were* equally, in spite of everything, as they are in dreams. However, it is certain that I, on that balcony, was either drawing (with green ink or with a little tube of ocher oil paint on cellophane) or writing verses. When the word ROSADA [dew] rang out.

It was Livio speaking, one of the Socolari boys, the neighbors further down the street. A tall and big-boned boy . . . a real country boy of those parts. . . . But nice and timid the way certain children of rich families are, full of discretion. Because country people, you know—Lenin says so—are petit bourgeois. However, Livio certainly spoke of simple and innocent things. The word "*rosada*" spoken on that sunny morning was only an expressive peak of his oral vivacity.

Certainly that word, in all the centuries of its use in the Friulian region which extends beyond the Tagliamento, *had never been written*. It had always and only been *a sound*.

Whatever I was doing that morning, painting or writing, certainly I stopped immediately: this is part of my hallucinatory memory. And I immediately wrote verses in that Friulian speech of the right bank of the Tagliamento, which up until that moment had been only *a collection of sounds*: first of all I began by putting into written form the word ROSADA.

That first experimental poem has disappeared; the second, which I wrote the following day, has remained:

Sera imbarlumida, tal fossal
a cres l'aga . . .

.

Luminous evening, in the ditch
the water rises . . . ⁷

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Where does my love for spoken language come from? To such an extent that now, twenty-five years after the first written adoption of a sound—of a pure sound, emitted from the mouths of pure speakers—I have come to think of spoken language as a category distinct

from every "*langue*" and from every "*parole*," a kind of hyper- or metastructure of every linguistic structure (there is no sign, however arbitrary, that, without a break in continuity, across tens of millennia, may not be led back to utterance, that is, to the biologically necessary *oral* linguistic expression)?*

In any case I would beg linguists not to read these two little pages that follow as if written by one of them, but by a writer who, confident in his own world, generalizes some of his observations in the margins of books recently and avidly appropriated.

6) Every language is a composition of many languages that have in common abstractions like a lexicon and grammar. The most common distinctions are: language of structure and language of superstructure (which is the principal distinction of Marxism), and "*langue*" and "*parole*" (which is the principal distinction of structuralism, of sociological linguistics).

The principal distinction that I want to propose is: *spoken language and spoken-written language*. Separating its elements, this would put in relationship the other two traditional distinctions, from whose fusion it would result that the real distinction within a language could be the following: *langue—spoken/written/structural*, and *parole—spoken/written/superstructural*.

The "spoken" word stands there, on the two horns of the distinction, like a ghost. And in fact it is a ghost since it is a linguistic category that is real only in the most extreme cases (primitive peoples).

In practical terms a language in use is distinguished in this way: from the spoken-written *langue* downwards, and from the spoken-written *langue* upwards. Downwards, the purely spoken language is

*All the linguists working in industrialized Europe—even the phonologists themselves!—have not had the sentimental, ideological, and, in short, political experience of a spoken language as an integrating part of their civilization, and that was purely spoken, that is, that belonged to a historic world anterior to theirs. With "pure speakers" they generally behaved like gatherers of lichens, [I want] to avoid being bad once again because of [my] exasperation, and say that they behaved like colonialists with peoples of color. It is the fatal racism of the bourgeoisie, of every bourgeoisie. For the rest, the great linguistic studies of the nineteenth century are contemporary with imperialistic expansion. Everyone knows that linguists are always very good and gentle people (at most a bit mad, as Saussure appears to be in an essay given at Palatina, no. 30, by Starobinsky: a Saussure who slightly resembles Anteo Crocioni).⁸ These notes of mine, therefore, should be read as those of a fanatical Marxist. Now the great European bourgeoisies, that is, the great European industries, have radically changed their relationship with these "pure speakers": they use them as immigrants, to keep salaries low. Lille and Cologne, Paris and London, are full of Italian, Greek, Spanish, Algerian, Moroccan, Negro "speakers"—who increase in number immensely every year. Their low salary is one of the reasons for the capitalistic renaissance. What will be the results, in linguistics, of this new political relationship? In the meantime, we have all of structuralist anthropology. In this Lévi-Strauss is the poet of low salaries, as Robbe-Grillet is the poet of monopolies. . . .

ghost of spoken language
spoken-written superstructure liberation from necessity

found, and nothing else. Upwards, the languages of culture are found, the infinite "*paroles*" (that still are *never*, like spoken language, *only written and nothing other than written*: they always continue to be spoken also).

This ghost of the spoken language—which belongs, in borderline cases, to a different period⁹ of civilization, to *another culture*—persisting alongside the spoken-written language, continually divides its nature; it continually represents an archaic historical period of the latter and at the same time its vital necessity and its type.

At one extreme (savages: whom I deal with here quite bluntly) the language which is [only] spoken and nothing more is communicative (actually on the level of biological necessity): at the other extreme (the intellectual elite of an industrialized society) it is both communicative and expressive (let us understand each other: it can also be communicative, for an overwhelming majority, as in deeds or notarized documents, or expressive, for a similarly overwhelming majority, as in certain of Rimbaud's verses).

There is therefore a mediating phase between these two languages, the biologically communicative and the communicative-expressive: *such a mediating phase, which assures the unity of language, is the Saussurian "langue," in its meaning as spoken-written language.*

When it is only instrumental, the spoken language is a "container": it places itself acritically in opposition to reality, whose contents it denotes on a purely deterministic level. It is, in short, the language of the beginning of necessity.

The language of the spoken-written, instrumental-expressive superstructure is not a pure and simple container of the contents of the awareness of reality, that is, of culture, but is awareness and culture; it is the direct and immediate product of the superstructure as moment of liberation from necessity, and the invention of other necessities, determined perhaps economically but not naturally—moral, religious, spiritual, literary necessities, etc.

This qualitative leap between the two languages is the ideal moment of man's passage from the prehistoric phase to the historical phase (each in his own [phase]: I am thinking of Lévi-Strauss). The passage from the pure and simple oral relationship with nature to the spoken-written relationship with work and with society.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of the spoken language is that of conserving a certain metahistoric unity through the continuous stratifications and survivals of every language.

No "oral substratum" is lost: it is dissolved in the new spoken language, amalgamating itself with it, and thus representing continuity concretely.

If a history of "spoken language" alone could be made, there would *never* be a break in continuity. On the contrary, in making a history of the "spoken-written language," as in fact is done, moreover, one must continually notice historical accidents, or, in any case, one may analyze their stratifications.

While the stratification of oral substrata is a continuum in the evolution of society, the stratification of spoken-written substrata leaves traces: revolutions and restorations, progressions and regressions, etc. Naturally, because of institutional language or langue the two languages are in such a ceaseless relationship as to be practically only one language in the various historical periods.

The "*langue*" relates in two ways language which is, ideally, only spoken and language which is, ideally, only written: that is, the spoken language can be part of the language of the superstructure through cultivated speakers or through the expressions—however cultural—of simple speakers; and vice versa, the written language can be a (prehistoric) spoken language through the newly spoken adoption of its lower-class and vulgarized terms. The two linguistic levels are put in contact through an interaction that can be expressed graphically with the sign X: where the two upper bars ideally represent only the written *langue*, the two lower bars ideally only the spoken *langue*, and the point of intersection the spoken-written *langue*.

A history of the spoken language is therefore not possible: (a) because, as I have already noted, past structures merge with present structures in a historical continuity which can no longer be reduced; (b) because the spoken-written language in the moment in which it settles in the oral structure, through the avenues of circulation established by the "*langue*," becomes merged there in a continuity no longer amenable to analysis.

On the other hand, even the superstructural languages, in their revolutionary phases, cannot undergo violent and radical changes: because revolution transforms structure (we are [speaking theoretically] in a diagram, in the laboratory, at a blackboard), but spoken language—that is, "containing the necessities of the preceding structure"—is preserved and changes its contents without changing itself, just as a glass can be filled with water or wine while always remaining the same glass. It is true that the superstructure as it is in our diagram, culture itself, tends to change, if not immediately, at times with a certain dramatic rapidity: *and since the spoken-written or only written language is nothing more than culture, a direct emanation of culture, it too tends to change.*

But it is still the "*langue*" which, through a relationship of interaction with the spoken language—which, notwithstanding violent revolutions, remains unchangeable—slows down the process of

transformation of the superstructural languages and de-dramatizes it.

I want to explain myself in an absolutely schematic way, taking French as an example. All the lengthy precedents don't interest me. I want to consider it at the moment in which the "*langue*" is established. At this specific, didactic, and completely unreal point, what picture is presented to us?

a) A spoken language, which is ONE,¹⁰ spoken by living Frenchmen, and which is a historic "continuum" formed by the "continuation" in itself, without breaks in continuity (1) of preceding structures (proto-French, Latin, scarcely Romanized Frankish, pre-Roman Frankish, etc., etc., down toward the prehistory of the Franks), (2) of spoken-written superstructures deposited and descended to a lower level (the civilization of the communal bourgeoisie, the Carolingian civilization, the medieval civilization, the Roman civilization, the Frankish pre-Roman civilization, etc., cited above). This purely instrumental "continuum" of the spoken language or "container of necessities" is unanalyzable like all those things for which a beginning, a conclusion, or a moment of immobility cannot be established.

b) A "*langue*" constituted by the establishment of the monarchic centralism that identifies itself with the entire nation, and in which the entire nation substantially identifies itself (with confrontations which are simply protestations). Such a "*langue*" puts the pure "spoken language," which exists in the way described above, in contact with the "spoken-written language," that is, the language of its superstructure (of its culture, be it military, agricultural, artisan, commercial, scientific, religious, or literary). It does not, however, make a synthesis of them, because the two languages are not in a dialectical relation, since the first is a datum that is given and moves like a natural reality (it is in principle the relation of man to nature; it is prehistoric and unconscious—purely deterministic), and therefore it is not given as a "thesis," but as a platform, or, more precisely, as a fact. m 2.0

c) A written, cultural language of the superstructure, in its two communicative and expressive aspects. The communicative aspect is completely contained in the "*langue*" that puts it into a downward relationship with the spoken language; in this manner the two necessities—the deterministically natural one and the deterministically social one—are in symbiosis. The expressive aspect is contained in part in both the spoken and the written "*langue*"; in part, which may be given as typical, in literary works or poetry: in the "*parole*."

What happens to the French Revolution on our blackboard?

a) *The spoken language remains the same* (only some super-

structural parts of its supplanted and useless monarchic-aristocratic structures have descended into it), but the historical "continuum" assures its perfect nonparticipation. It continues to be that container which it has always been. And it isn't modified by new "accrued" additions, which are simply a question of quantity. The innocent diachronic functionality of simple speakers does not have breaks in continuity. It is a continuum that occupies the whole of human time, and it is therefore a static entity (in other words, it is not succeeded in time, but it is *complete in all time*). In this static-continuum of purely phonetic language speakers said "rwa" and "batayon" before the Revolution, and they continued to say "rwa" and "batayon" after the Revolution.

Class struggles and revolutions don't affect the continuum of purely oral language: it has other schedules, other rhythms, and other tempos, which those of social struggles and abrupt changes of structure affect insignificantly.

b) The "*langue*," instead, appears changed: in fact the "social language," dominated first of all by the monarchic-feudal model, reacquires its own reality, brings itself up to date. Were "rwe" and "battaillon" said artificially because of a historical reason [which is] no longer valid (if for centuries the bourgeoisie was undermining the aristocratic monarchy)? Well, now one says "rwa" and "batayon."

c) Those concretions of "*langue*" which individual "*paroles*" are—they, too, consequently change: the new languages of the cultural elites are also characterized by the violent recovery of the reality of the spoken language; and they enter rather abruptly into a new phase of civilization (rather [abruptly] but not completely so, because the bourgeois language of Illuminism had prefigured them, creating a prerevolutionary tradition for them). Therefore, the linguistic model, [which derived] terminologically and stylistically from the court, was substituted at first by the model of the bourgeois intellectual elites, and then by the model of the first technical languages of industrial organization, that is, the languages of the infrastructures.

(Doing this same analysis on the Russia of before and after the Revolution, what results would we have? The only thing I feel able to state is that the languages as purely phonetic languages have continued their *static evolution* unperturbed, the one which "is complete in all of time." I don't know Russian, not even a little, so as to be able to make some observations on the second and third points, the "spoken-written *langue*" and the "special languages" of high levels. So far as we know, there is only the libel of Stalin's bad faith, which therefore appears as a naive justification for the lack of prestige of a revolutionary elite that might substitute as the model of high languages, especially of literary language, for the model

established up until then by Western culture—futurism, Russian formalism, etc., etc.—that is, the failure of the “continuation of the revolution.”)

Returning to France and to the other capitalistic nations affected by the “internal revolution,” due to the application of science (which is thus to be seen as the most important phase for humanity after that of the first sowing along the Nile twelve thousand years ago—which, establishing the bases of agricultural and artisan civilization, remains the dominant manifestation of all human history and art until a few years ago) what is, linguistically, the most sensational fact?

I would say that it is *the substitution of the languages of the infrastructures, as linguistic model, for the languages of the superstructures.*

In fact, from that first sowing until the capitalistic period of “free competition,” the linguistic models that dominate a society and make it linguistically unitary are the models of the cultural superstructures (with the preminent importance of the literary language): so much so that it can be said that, in this sense, there is no substantial difference between the irradiating and homologizing function of language based on the model of the French Court with its men of letters, and the one based on the model of capitalistic power, also with its men of letters. But such continuity is illusory; we see it today. Abruptly, in fact, the irradiating and homologizing function of the language of intellectual elites (law, religion, school, literature) is ceasing—with the passage from capitalism to neo-capitalism, through its “internal revolution,” which coincides with the technological revolution. It is replaced by the analogous function of the languages of technicians. Therefore the languages of the infrastructures, let us simply say the languages of production, are guiding society linguistically.* It had never happened before.

7) Another small and amateurish innovation of this essay with respect to current structuralist linguistics is the diachrony (which appears in the “semantic area” of the structuralists as due to casual and inscrutable phonetic mutations) intended not as the product of an evolution of the system or of a political and thus, schematically, linguistic revolution against the system, but as the product of an “internal revolution of the system.”

I mean that the “*langue*”—in a stabilized and advanced society such as, for example, the nations of the great European bourgeoisies—does not evolve only regularly (as the politico-social estab-

*With these words my essay “New Linguistic Questions,” pp. 3–22, can be recapitulated.

lishment* permits), *but can also be modified in a revolutionary manner*. This happens when the establishment* enters into a developmental crisis because of a "revolution created by itself." Let us suppose precisely the transformation of a capitalistic society into a neocapitalistic one, which would be a simple evolution if it were a question of a purely extensive fact, of an improvement of a reformist type, etc., etc.—and instead is a revolution because the transformation of a society from capitalistic to neocapitalistic coincides with the transformation of the "scientific spirit" into the "application of science," and with the anthropological mutations that this implies.

There have been "internal revolutions" of this type in history. And often, albeit in an irregular way, they have coincided with external revolutions, that is, revolutions born of social struggles or in any case from a radical opposition to the system. For example, the "scientific revolution" was accompanied or preceded by external revolutions (for example, the religious revolution of Protestantism, etc.). But it can be said that up to now languages have evolved following the evolution of the social system within whose sphere they lived, and which they represented. For several thousand years there have been no "internal revolutions" of the current type—due to the integral application of science. It is necessary to see (and I don't really know who could see it) what linguistic effects that "first sowing" had on the populations that lived on the banks of the Nile twelve thousand years ago, and to see that it was the first "internal revolution" of humanity (with the huge increase in the population as the immediate consequence and, a thousand years later, the first Pharaoh).

In this instance, today, we don't find ourselves facing the possibility of a sociolinguistic *evolution* in the neocapitalistic world as an alternative to a sociolinguistic *revolution* (in effect, being put into effect, or not yet in effect) in the Marxist world. But, stated roughly, we find ourselves facing *two competing revolutions*: the *internal* one of neocapitalism and the Marxist one, *external* to the system.

The realization of these two revolutions—above all if it is seen in a frame of parallel hypotheses—is one of unresolvable complication: if the internal revolution must take into account exigencies predicated on the external one, etc., and the eventual external revolution were to come to operate in a field already cultivated by the simultaneous activities of infinite "establishments"[†] preceding the internal revolution.

The complication, then, of the linguistic relationships between

*Pasolini uses the English word "establishment" here.—Ed.

†Pasolini uses the English word "establishments" here.—Ed.

the political revolution and the linguistic transformation of a society is inexorably assured by that particular X-shaped type of exchange between the languages that are found from the spoken-written boundary on up and the languages that are found from the spoken-written boundary on down.

Nevertheless, I believe that it could be said schematically that the *external revolution* (in the Marxist case, in its various phases, from the beginning of a vast and profound awareness of class to the eventual conquest of power) tends to act and to bring modifications to the languages that are found from the spoken-written limit on up, and among these particularly on the literary language, while the *internal revolution*—in the case in point, the new technological and technocratic society in its revolutionary evolution—tends to act and to bring modifications also and particularly from the spoken-written languages on down (the Italian accent of the Calabrese who emigrates to Turin and installs himself there linguistically, pushed by one of the vectors of the “internal revolution of neocapitalism,” that is, the cynically programmed conservation of underdeveloped areas as reserves of poorly paid manual labor).

8) Changing the subject, another little novelty of these pages in the area of structuralist linguistics consists in bringing “spoken language” back to its function, which can only be simultaneous and present, both as historical reality and as specific linguistic phase.

On this avenue it would be necessary (with other means than mine) to bring back the *memorial*¹¹ beyond *langues*, still understood instinctively as spoken-written institutional languages: beyond *langues* up until the time in which *langues* were and are purely vocal. [On this avenue it would be necessary] to perform a conjunction, in an anthropological ambience, between the structuralistic memory and the Jungian “collective unconscious” . . .

Apropos of this I have a personal memory to put on the table of laboratories better equipped than mine. I was three, three and a half years old (I know because I was living at Belluno, and at Belluno I could be no more than that age): precisely in those months—but I don't know if it was before or after—my brother was born (this brought into play my conjectures on his birth). I see before my eyes my little bed at the foot of the big bed of my mother and father; I see before my eyes the kitchen (on whose table I used to sit for a not forgotten martyrdom, to have an eyewash put in my eyes, poured into them by my father). The kitchen of an infantry captain in 1925, poor and clean, petit-bourgeois and rural, etc., etc. I see before my eyes myself, who asks his parents how babies are born, and my mother, in her fresh innocence, in her mild naturalness, who wants to tell me, and tells me: “They are born from the mama's belly!”—

and I, who naturally didn't believe it. I didn't yet know how to write (but I lacked only a month or two, I believe, given my precocity; however, I drew): *therefore my language was only spoken then*. Through such a language I was *adapting* myself to Belluno (it was the fourth move: Bologna, Parma, Conegliano, Belluno). There were the neighbors—a nursery school, boys who played soccer in the little gardens in front of the station (because the house of my fourth relocation, my non-ancestral home, was situated in front of the station).

In that period I still got along fairly well with my father, I think. I was exceptionally given to tantrums, that is, I was presumably neurotic, but good. Toward my mother (pregnant, but I don't remember it) I felt what I've felt all my life—a desperate love. It is noteworthy that around a year, a year and a half before (at Conegliano: I still see the large bed of my parents on whose immense white expanse all this happens) I had a cycle of "serial" dreams in which I lost my mother and looked for her through reddish streets full of porticoes of the ghost of Bologna (amazing in its boundless sadness), and I even went up by certain gloomy internal stairs toward the apartments of family friends to ask about her, etc., etc. In that period at Belluno, precisely between three and three and a half years, I experienced the first pangs of sexual love: identical to those that I would then have up to now (atrociously acute from sixteen to thirty)—that terrible and anxious sweetness that seizes the viscera and consumes them, burns them, twists them, like a hot melting gust of wind in the presence of the love object. I believe I remember only the legs of this love object—and exactly the hollow behind the knee with its taut tendons—and the synthesis of the features of the inattentive creature—strong, happy, and protective (but a traitor, always called elsewhere), so much that one day I went to find that object of my tender-terrible heartache in her house—up certain little Bellunese cottage stairs, which I can still see now—to knock at the door and to ask [about her]: I still hear the negative words that told me that she was not at home. Naturally I didn't know what it was about; I knew only the physical nature of the presence of that feeling, so dense and burning that it twisted my viscera. I therefore found myself with the physical necessity of "naming" that sentiment, and, in my condition as only an oral speaker, not a writer, I invented a word. This term was, I remember perfectly, "TETA VELETA."

One day I told this anecdote to Gianfranco Contini, who discovered that first of all it was a matter of a "reminder,"* of a linguistic phenomenon typical of prehistory, and then that it was a question of a "reminder"* of an ancient Greek word "*Tetis*" (sex, be

*The word "reminder" is in English.—Ed.

it masculine or feminine, as everyone knows). "*Teta veleta*" fitted perfectly into my "*langue*," into the oral linguistic institution that I made use of. It seems to me that I never confessed this term to anyone then (because I felt that the feeling that it defined was marvelous but shameful). Perhaps I only tried to ask my mama about it during some walk along the Piave; on this point I'm not certain. . . .

Still in the context of liberation in the laboratory of the purely oral element as a past but still present historical reality of language:

Ninetto [Davoli], who sees snow for the first time in his life (he is Calabrese: he was too little for the snowfall of '57 in Rome, or perhaps he hadn't yet come from Calabria). We have just arrived in Pescasseroli; the expanses of snow have already made him rejoice with a pure surprise a little too childish for his age (he's sixteen). But with the advent of night the sky suddenly becomes white, and, as we leave the hotel to take a stroll in the deserted town, suddenly the air becomes alive; because of a strange optical effect, since the tiny flakes are going toward the earth, it seems as if they are rising toward the sky, but irregularly, because their fall is not continuous, a capricious mountain wind makes them whirl. Looking up makes your head spin. It seems that the whole sky is falling on us, disintegrating in that happy and stormy feast of Apennine snow. You can imagine Ninetto. No sooner has he perceived the never-before-seen event, that disintegration of the sky on his head, not knowing the obstacles of proper upbringing to the manifestation of his own feelings, he abandons himself to a completely shameless joy. It has two very rapid phases: first, it is a kind of dance, with very precise rhythmic caesuras (I am reminded of the Denka, who strike the ground with their heels, and who, in turn, had made me think of Greek dances, as we imagine them when reading the verses of the poets). He does it scarcely at all, hints at it, that rhythm that strikes the ground with his heels, moving the knees up and down. The second phase is oral: it consists of an orgiastic-infantile shout of joy that accompanies the high points and caesuras of that rhythm: "He-eh, he-eh, heeeeeeh." In short, a shout that does not have a written equivalent. A vocalization due to a *memorial which joins in a continuity without interruption* the Ninetto of now at Pescasseroli to the Ninetto of Calabria—marginal area and custodian of Greek civilization—to the pre-Greek, purely barbaric Ninetto, who strikes his heel on the ground as the prehistoric nude Denka now do in the lower Sudan.

9) The necessity of the sign would therefore appear to be able to be predicated only on oral signs, and in a particular way on interjections, the pregrammatical quantitatives of our language. When one says "*langue*" one means (at least among nonspecialists like me) a

linguistic abstraction, inferred from infinite "*paroles*," which is an integral whole, etc., etc., of oral signs *that can also be written*. In other words, the "*langue*" is always presented as the language of a civilization, a culture, even if it is also extremely primitive. Saussure, opposing "*langue*" to "*parole*," thus seemed to have in mind the institutions or linguistic systems of civilized human, or at any rate already human, groups: on this side of the stage of purely animal phonation—which survives later in history as an interjection or as an invention strangely analogous to certain unconscious or animal feelings, "the language of conditioned reflexes." The purely oral phase of language corresponds to a philosophical phase of mankind: it is both historical (the prehistorical human communities) and absolute (the category of prehistory that remains in our unconscious) (whence, at this point, the necessity of the conjunction of linguistics with psychoanalysis, with ethnology and anthropology, and good work to *L'Homme!*).

However, it would please me at this point to offer timidly a suggestion, a poetic hypothesis to linguists who have been interested in this problem: *the third term between "langue" and "parole" (whose radical dichotomy seems unsustainable) could be the "purely oral phase of language."*

That is, language in the moment [it was] being formed from individual signs of the interjective type, which [type] is mysteriously analogous to real feelings stimulated by real facts and things—conditioned reflexes—was not and is not an arbitrary abstraction, *but a coherent physical whole of necessary signs*. Every sign would therefore have this necessary origin, become arbitrary afterwards, in the moment in which the purely phonic language (the outcry of the animal and of physical necessities, of instincts) begins to become potentially also a written language; that is, the language of a culture (primitive, granted, in the context of "primitive thought").

Such a purely oral phase of language continues to define our phonemes as necessary, and consequently lends the concreteness of the phoneme of the "*parole*" to the phonic abstraction of the "*langue*."

Someone will say at this point: this manipulator of linguistic events describes the eschatology of his writing as a "note for a Marxist linguistics"—anti-Stalinist in nature—and places before us here alternatives that drive us back toward cultural situations [which are] so deeply, so provincially Italian? There's not only the aroma of Vico, but the smell of Croce, and even the stench of Bertoni. . . . The *homo sapientissimus* of stylistics [understood] as general linguistics and the *homo alatus* are mingled in interjections heard the way a pupil of Vossler or Wagner would have been able to

hear them. . . . The ghosts of neolinguists are moving around . . . Spitzer smiles in the grave. . . .¹² The devotees of a nation united literarily before [it was united] socially wish at all costs to see a poet in every underdeveloped agricultural worker, and in a poet who writes, the disseminator of linguistic inventions in a country where, at the time of unification, ninety percent of the people didn't know how to read. . . .

Well, yes, having to accept the fact that I was born in an Italian city during the twenties, I can't then not accept having bad Italian (petit-bourgeois) habits; and I'm not sorry, therefore, because of a deep-seated Vicoan and poetic fascination with things, to offer [the following] as a *tertium* in the Saussurean opposition of *langue* and *parole*: "language in its purely oral aspect, the language of conditioned reflexes," this necessary and individualistic datum—ideally preceding society, that is culture (the eschatology of spoken language with respect to conventional and thus arbitrary uses, with respect to its ambiguous form as spoken language and written language that every "*langue*" is).

On the other hand: is the "sign" of the language of film arbitrary? I would like to specify immediately that I don't intend to establish an equivalence between the film "sign" as aesthetic, jargonlike language and the literary "sign," but I do intend to establish an equivalence within the film "sign" so that cinema may be a possible language of potential human communication, a possible system or linguistic structure, a language of social relationship. Once thought of, the hypothesis that the explosion of an atom bomb might make us completely mute and incapable of writing can no longer be discarded—and that it would thus compel us to express ourselves, for example, through cinema—also in order to prepare a notarized document or ask a barman for a tea. . . . In such a case the actual stylistic film operation would be based (as *parole*) on a social film language that is only a hypothesis (potentially a *langue*). For semiotics this doesn't matter. All signs are equal: mimed, written, spoken, painted, or photographed.

Well, everything can be said of a film "sign" except that it is "arbitrary." Granted, I am stating this intuitively (once again because of my Italian birthplace): because no one has yet written a "grammar" of film and thus no one knows what, for example, the hypothetical "sign" of the potential film *langue* would be. We don't have a neogrammatical tradition here, but only a neolinguistic one! Whatever the case may be, given the great virginity of the film sign, perhaps it is possible to study it better than the old linguistic sign, full of such historical complexity that perhaps only future robots, having attained supreme perfection, will be able to analyze it. The cinematographic "sign," as it presents itself to our experience, that

is, as the stylistic "sign" of a "*parole*" based on a *hypothetical potential language*, doesn't offer aspects of arbitrariness: it is in direct service of the "meaning," and the "machines" or operations of "communication as representation" are used in direct service of that meaning. If I want to denote a running horse, I use the photographic image of a running horse: if I want to represent a horse that, running, goes toward a gallows, I use alternate photographic images of a running horse and a gallows until they are brought together. Between the im-sign, or significant film image, and the signified there is a strict bond of necessity. Thus, the signified ("horse," "gallows") is the sign of itself.

10) We have thus taken as our point of departure some observations on writing-speaking Italy: observations that have pointed out and dramatized (at least through the concrete and private experience of the author) the "spoken language" as a static continuum, involving isogenetic origins, and contained as a whole in time, not in history.

These observations of custom have taken two directions:

A) They have brought me—at a modest level of discourse *inter pocula*¹³—to try to define what the effects of class struggles are on the diachronic aspect of *langues* and of special languages (*internal revolutions* would operate physically in the masses—in a kind of anthropological transformation—from spoken-written languages on down; *external revolutions* would operate instead or before all else in the special languages of the *elites*. In the linguistic modification in force in European capitalistic circles, owing to the internal revolution of capitalism, the newest and most scandalous phenomenon would be the substitution, as the guide for such a modification, of the technical languages of the infrastructures for the humanistic languages of the superstructures).

B) Such observations have also brought me subsequently to perceive in the "ideally and purely oral" signs a necessity that we might be able to call biological and permanent, on which in the final analysis the so-called arbitrariness of the spoken-written signs of civil *langues* would be founded: consequently, the orality of the language would come to appear as metachronic, and in itself it would resolve the synchrony-diachrony dilemma of the structuralist "semantic tables."

I realize very well that all this should be elaborated in an entirely different laboratory than mine, that of the writer unsatisfied with his specific function: however, if all this lacks reliability and validity, consider it as a "test" of the contamination of an Italian culture (aesthetics as general linguistics, neolinguistics, the sentimental

Marxism of the fifties) with European culture (in this particular instance, Saussurean linguistics).

And in this context, regarding, that is, this concrete (and almost novel-like) situation, I want to make other observations, as someone who "writes about his own writing."

The fact of being Italian compels me to not be a structuralist, to not have a "head" for structuralism. I live in an establishment* as idiotic as it is precarious. I don't have any social certainty around. For example, the phonic and grammatical structures of my language are unstable, arbitrary, infinitely changing, infinitely troubled by competing forms, and held together by an organizing will that is either imaginary or authoritarian, etc., etc. I, by speaking—in the pure and simple act of speaking—live a structure that is in the process of being structured: I myself contribute to such a structuration, and I know it, but I don't know what it is founded on, and what it will be, etc., etc. Moreover, if the social class in which I live (and which, in any case, I detest) has relatively precise structures—that is, it resembles, apart from any value judgment, all the other European petite bourgeoisies—nevertheless, my society as a whole lives on two different historic levels. It is a coexistence of two different social structures (the industrial North and the preindustrial South; and it is for this, for example, that it is so hard for me not to imagine but to experiment in the concrete manifestations of Italian culture, Goldmann's euphemism of determinism). For all these reasons I cannot and will never be able to relinquish a tension owed to the desire to bring order to the magma of things and not to content myself with knowing its geometry (that is, I don't have and never will have an alternative other than Marxism).

I know very well (and this is the problem of the sixties) that, for example, anthropological structuralism (fascinating in its study of primitive thought and in its interpretation of totemism) represents to perfection in the countries of advanced capitalism the period of Western thought which seems to surpass Marxism for something new, and to be extremely tense in its old "intellectualism, idealism and nominalism" of which Lévi-Strauss is accused by Gurvitch.¹⁴ The other something that seems to age Marxism in Europe—through the vital impulse that it receives from the *internal revolution* of capitalism projected toward the future—is empiricism, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries, naturally. Gurvitch represents it in France. His accusation of Lévi-Strauss is correct, but he opposes to Lévi-Strauss an ontological and therefore irrationalistic-empirical notion of society. The total social phenom-

*Pasolini uses the English word "establishment" here.—Ed.

enon, or the social whole of which he speaks, is defined ontologically by him: "This whole has an ontological primacy," he says.¹⁵ And this ontological mystery of his will never be able to be translated integrally into reality and history, that is, become knowable: "None of the social macrocosms," Gurvitch says, "even when it is clearly structured, is ever reducible to its structure."¹⁶ Everything that is ontological is irreducible, naturally. If *l'école du regard* corresponds to Lévi-Strauss, "*talqualismo*" corresponds to Gurvitch.¹⁷ And Gurvitch is also right (it seems to an Italian like me) when he speaks of the "dangerous temptation" in Lévi-Strauss "consisting in the substitution for structure, which is real, of its type."¹⁸ But it isn't a dangerous temptation, it's exactly the philosophy of Lévi-Strauss! Even if one wishes to define such a philosophy as "formalistic and axiomatic infatuation."¹⁹ That of Gurvitch, nevertheless, appears as irrationalistic and *qualunquistica* when, "first of all," it wants to get rid of the "sociologies of order" and of the "sociologies of progress."²⁰

It is the same technicality that formalizes structure in its type, that formalizes structure in a concept of structure that is explained through structure (according to an old indication of Saussure). This is why I would rather tend to accept the criticisms put to Lévi-Strauss by American sociologists and their demand that the danger of "structural formalism" be eliminated, its metahistoricity, studied in the "type" of structure rather than in the real social phenomenon—not through a brutal recourse to the ontology of reality, but wagering everything on the movement of reality: that is, in the implacable and dogged definition of structure as "structuration, destructuration, and restructuration" (about which Gurvitch speaks very well)—that is, of the definition of structure as process.*²¹

It is at this point that, in the obsessive need to return to Marxism—that is, to the only ideology that protects me from the loss of reality—the old notions of value and dialectics intervene to explain "structure as process" (avoiding the ontological fatality of its champions in the Middle and Far West). Seeking to avoid processes of reconciliation that are a bit naive, all things considered (like that attempted however reasonably by Lefebvre and others), I would tend to seek points of support within structuralism: in the "semantic" or even "notional" camps, and even by citing Louis Hjelmslev, who, without any suspicion, spoke to the Congress of Oslo in 1957: "To introduce therein the notion of *structure* into the study of semantic facts means to introduce the notion of *value* next to that of *meaning*." Which really seems to me to be a suitable epigraph for every possible future meditation on these things.

*In Italy Cesare Segre proposes the term "chronotope."²²

And I would further cite, in full, the brief and burning summary of the speech of Roumeguère at the terminological assembly in the context of the Etymological Dictionary of the Social Sciences supported by UNESCO, Paris, 10–12 January 1959:²³

It is necessary to reinsert the notion of structure into a perspective of genetic and historical epistemology. The notion of "structure" is in fact a committed notion; it is epistemological to the greatest degree. Every researcher engages a form, a structure of thought; he inserts his thought on the level of reality.

Some reflections on the appearance of the concept will be able to demonstrate it. [The notion of structure] appears around 1847; its emergence as a concept represents an epistemological awareness by certain thinkers (afterwards there would be contamination; that is, the word has been adopted by other thinkers). But an awareness of what? Not of the word that already exists, but of the situation of scientific thought. A new need has gone beyond the threshold of the collective consciousness. At first one spoke of form, of system. How was the notion of structure reached?

Before the eighteenth century, thought could be qualified as "static rationalistic thought." Beginning with romanticism, such notions as becoming, evolution, the dialectization of concepts. . . . Reality begins to move, to peel away; notions of negation, complementariness, reciprocal implications appear.

Paralleling these new processes of the *forma mentis*, the notion of the object is modified. "Static rationalism" represents a *monovalence* of reality; "dynamic rationalism" will introduce a *polyvalence*; finally, a "dialectical rationalism": a layered structure of reality.

The appearance of all the new logics comes from that time. To finish, in physics, psychology, ethnography, [there is] the participation of the observer in the observed, and this interaction between observer and observed carries with it a reciprocal implication. The implication and relation between *namer* and *named* [is] inherent in the very matter of this new aspect of reality. The concept of "structure" is clothed in a triple halo of uncertainty:

- 1) because the notion is in becoming, in development;
- 2) because it is a dangerous notion; the polymorphism of structures;
- 3) the interaction between the namer and the named induces a dialectical examination of the formulation of the term.

I know very well that none of the structuralists would deny this epistemological violence of the notion of structure: and in fact all of them, when they can, underline its necessity, in order to correct either their excess of philosophy (that is, their conscious or unconscious effort to "bring up" the structure "too much," as Merleau-Ponty says) or their excess of empiricism (and therefore their tendency to "bring it too far down").

In reality what we live above all is the epistemological tension of the notion of structuralism. Philosophers (as is Lévi-Strauss because of his culture and *forma mentis*) live its epistemological tension in the monovalence postulated by a rationalism of a static type, that is, in the verticality of structure, in its potential to coincide with essence. The empiricists [live its tension] in the polyvalence implied by dynamic rationalism, that is, by its coincidence with an irrationalism with a distant, probably Bergsonian, origin: the ontology of movement ("social structures are like *clothes*: underneath there is *something else* that makes them move and even explode"—Gurvitch [the italics are mine—PPP]). And finally, the Marxists live it in their dialectical rationalism.

Still, in those moments [which have] perhaps unjustly become most typical, structuralism is presented as a sort of "geometry of the magma"; therefore the magma can only be known in its geometric projection. But both the poet, who is not satisfied with a cognitive act but wishes to have direct experience of the magma, standing in it, living inside it—and the Marxist, who is not satisfied with knowing and describing a geometry of "reality that is," but wishes to bring order to it, both in knowledge and in action—rebel at the wave of formalism and empiricism of the great European neocapitalistic renaissance. And their problem is to fill the schemata of "structure as process" with values; certainly not with the values of the "naive philosophy" of which Lévi-Strauss spoke, but, naturally, with the values of Marxist ideology, since whoever experiences "temporality in a peculiar way," that is, the process, is the very same person who exercises his observation from the outside: that is, if it's a question of political structures, he is the protagonist of the class struggle—whose revolutionary glance is also critical in the living of an irreducible experience. It is, in other words, the look of class consciousness. Process and metaprocess in this revolutionary consciousness happen simultaneously.

(1965)

Notes

1. *Ordine Nuovo*, increasingly important Socialist weekly founded by Gramsci; Pasolini refers to the journal's First Series of 1919–1920.
2. "*Vocean*" is a reference to *La Voce* (1908–1916), a cultural periodical founded by Giuseppe Prezzolini which made a significant impact upon early twentieth-century Italian culture. It had many distinguished contributors.
3. *Koinè* is Greek for the common language.
4. In standard Italian, *fascista abietto*: the pronunciation of Trieste is a kind of lisp that strikes an Italian ear as extremely refined.
5. Acronym for Radio Italiana, the state radio and television broadcasting system, a monopoly at the time Pasolini was writing.

6. The Prague School of linguistics is identified with the functionalist wing of Saussurean linguistics and with the prominent linguist Roman Jakobson.

7. The first lines of the poem "Il fanciullo morto" ("The Dead Youth") in *Poesie a Casarsa* (Bologna, 1942), a small group of poems in the Friulian dialect and Pasolini's first published volume of poetry.

8. "Les anagrammes de Ferdinand de Saussure, textes présentés par Jean Starobinsky," *Mercure de France*, 350 (February 1964), 243-62; Anteo Crocioni is the visionary protagonist of Paolo Volponi's novel *La macchina mondiale* (*The World Machine*, 1965).

9. The word here is *momento*, whose meaning in Italian corresponds to the meaning of "moment" in English. However, at times Pasolini uses *momento* to mean "phase" or "period," and *momento* has accordingly been translated as phase, period, or moment, depending upon the particular context.

10. The sense of Pasolini's description of a spoken language "which is ONE" is that this language is *only* one, as opposed to the many spoken Italian languages.

11. Pasolini writes *memorial*, which is probably an error for the French *mémorial*, in context best rendered as memory in the sense of atavistic or instinctive memory.

12. Vossler and Spitzer are romance philologists, Wagner a romantic composer; Vico, Croce, and Bertoni are philosophers and literary critics. The sentence beginning "there's not only the aroma of Vico . . ." to the end of the paragraph consists of objections that an orthodox linguist might make to Pasolini's ideas; namely, that the concept of oral language as intermediary between *langue* and *parole* is clearly heterodox and that the argument "stinks" of Italian provincialism, i.e., the tradition represented by Vico, Croce, et al. Moreover, an orthodox linguist would assert that the scientific approach of stylistics as general linguistics ("*homo sapientissimus*") is being contaminated by the fantasies of the poet ("*homo alatus*"), who feels the "purely oral phase of the language" in the common people or peasantry.

13. Pasolini's intention is self-deprecatory here: a discourse *inter pocula* is on the order of "cocktail party chitchat."

14. Both Lévi-Strauss and Gurvitch were participants in the debate on the term "structure" recorded in *Sens et usage du terme structure dans les sciences humaines et sociales*, ed. Roger Bastide (Gravenhage, 1962). Pasolini cites the Italian edition, *Usi e significati del termine "struttura"* (*Uses and Meanings of the Word "Structure"*: Milan, 1966), p. 126. Subsequent page references will be to this edition.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *École du regard*: the French new novel of the sixties, whose chief practitioners were Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, and Nathalie Sarraute. *Talqualismo* is a pejorative analogue to the French *tel quel*, "just as it is," the name of a Parisian scholarly journal at the center of structuralist and other avant-garde critical ideas during the sixties and early seventies.

18. *Usi e significati*, p. 126.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 116. See "An Article in Il Giorno," n. 11, for *qualunquistica*.

21. *Usi e significati*, p. 118.

22. "Critica e strutturalismo," *I segni e la critica* (*Signs and Criticism*: Turin, 1969), p. 28: "By imagining the work of art as three-dimensional space, we would be able to say that the various critical methodologies have

preferred to cover—from time to time—a single dimension, plucking surfaces or lines out of the work with an entirely legitimate act of choice. Structuralism, thanks to the greater organic quality of its presentations, can aim at a three-dimensional analysis, or, in short, in some way grasp the volume of the work. The theory of relativity, however, has integrated a fourth dimension—time—with the three of Euclidean geometry. Now one could very well demand (and on this point historical criticism boasts unexceptional references) a critical description of the work that integrates the new dimension with the three traditional ones. This means taking (historical) time into consideration, but in its aspect of dimension of a work, understanding a work of art, in short, as a *chronotope*."

23. One of the participants in the debate on the term "structure" which appears in the appendix of *Usi e significati*, pp. 201–202.

LITERATURE

I am a little late to review a book published by Sansoni last year (Giulio Herzeg, *The Free Indirect Style in Italian*):¹ for this reason this isn't a review but a collection of notes and digressions—such as are made in the margins of a book (whence some contradictions).

The first note is—not without some implication of the motifs that will have an insistent development—in the margin of the paragraphs on the use in the Free Indirect of that “infinitival category” which Alf Lombard calls “infinitives of narration” or “historical infinitives.”² The example here is taken from L. Da Ponte:

To labor night and day
 for someone who doesn't know how to appreciate;
To bear rain or wind,
To eat badly and *to sleep* badly.
 I want to act the gentleman
 and I don't want to serve any longer.³

This grammatical form that serves to speak through the speaker—and thus to undergo or accept psychological and sociological modification—has been what made me at first fear that in the book of a university specialist I would have found with difficulty the real reasons for a grammatical usage and a stylistic procedure that imply such a mass of conscious and unconscious intentions.

Beyond “descriptiveness” or “narrative historicity,” at least two other functions could in fact be glimpsed in such an infinitive. Let us call one of them “epic,” the other “inchoative.”

If one listens carefully to it, there is a completely special sense of normativity in the sound of such an infinitival category: special in that it doesn't presuppose an addressee but a chorus of addressees—in short, a chorus listening to and recognizing the experiences from which the deduction of the norm is born. Indeed, the chorus is such as to assume the greatest relevance, to the detriment of the experience witnessed. That is, the experience that establishes the norms is meaningful only in that it is choral, shared by a whole category of people. (The expression “by a social class” almost slipped out.)

If I pile up infinitives for normative purposes I am not behaving in a stylistically different way from the authors of books of culinary art (“Take two eggs . . .”). The rules that I list have the characteristics of

traditional and in some way *de facto* institutionalized absoluteness. I imply, that is, a popular experience which is typical of all the normativity of proverbs or work songs—and which can achieve some kind of epic quality.

And so, too, the infinitive as “inchoative,” that is, as description of repeated actions—always because of a normativity alluded to with the absolute certainty of being understood, of exciting sympathetic sentiments in other people who not only have had similar experiences but who don’t even have the possibility of thinking for themselves of different experiences. These verses cited from Da Ponte are directed at a category of persons who make a kind of philosophical feeling of reality out of their own experience as humble persons, as servants (to labor, to suffer, to eat badly, and to sleep badly); [who] obtain an absolute understanding—almost as if because of an adamant, preeminent, and fatal given of life. Also in this inchoative function—which expresses actions done, to be done, done by everyone, done throughout the centuries, past and future, by doers who are always the same, and who are almost identified with “men”—there is a profound sense of the choral and of the epic.

The infinitival category in the Free Indirect in any case implies a humble and, I would say, labor-union-like epic quality: and so it does not imply only a simple “reanimation” of the speech of a speaker as a statistically and above all socially individualized particular character,⁴ but of a typical speaker, a representative of a whole category of speakers, thus of a milieu, even a people. . . . The sympathy of the author in “reanimating” his speech grammatically thus doesn’t go out to him, but to all those like him, to his world.

Also on the use of the past perfect tense, Herczeg strikes me as being a bit dull. Perhaps it’s true that its use is scarce in comparison with other tenses (for example in comparison with the imperfect, which is the principal tense of reanimated speech). Nevertheless, it is necessary to keep this in mind: that there are books which consist entirely of free indirect discourses. That is, the very frequent use of the imperfect implies a writer-narrator who, at a certain moment, because of a mysterious need for intercommunication with his character and a not less mysterious need of expressiveness, creates the stylistic condition necessary to make himself the narrator through his character: above all in the revivals of the past and in the bitter or joyous reflections on present conditions—the purring of meditative thought, of grumbling, of regretting, of recriminating, etc., etc.

But there are cases, I repeat, in which the writer renounces being a writer-narrator from the very beginning and immerses himself in

his character immediately, narrating *everything* through him. Such an abdication is a technique: hence, in itself, insignificant. In fact a writer can use such a procedure for two completely opposite reasons: (a) assuming as narrator a character who is not the author himself to make what he wants to say fictitiously objective: for example, his particular vision of the world (Grass in the dwarf, Volponi in Anteo Crocioni),⁵ (b) to try to render really objective the narration of a world objectively different (read: in terms of social class) from that of the author (the writer in Tommaso Puzilli: and Verga in the Malavoglia!).⁶ In the cases in which entire books are free indirect discourses, the past perfect is inevitably part of the linguistic system of the character adopted as indirect narrator.

Naturally Herczeg has gathered his examples from a naturalistic-romantic literature (and he could do little else in Italy). But the theoretically fundamental function of the past perfect seems clear to me when it involves an entire book intended completely as reanimated. And therefore the definitive ideologization that derives from it—when it's a question of a novel with a philosophical or allegorical thesis and the definitive epicization when it's a question of a novel mediating another vital (class) experience. All the past perfects of Verga are "epic": they are tenses of a discourse reanimated collectively in all of his characters, and the "stylistic condition" for such a discourse is expanded to include the whole book. Such a procedure came to Verga as a naturalistic illusion not yet separated from romantic regressions in the speakers, from the romantic myth of the people. But it was clear that there was something that presided over both operations belonging to literary ideology, to currents of aesthetic thought. I would say, with little originality, that it was a question (unknown to Verga) of the presence of class consciousness in the history of Marx.

"The reference to Ariosto as a source of notable richness of the free indirect is a valuable discovery of Günther's: Günther states that he has found around sixty examples in the *Orlando Furioso*.⁷ Indeed, it's a rule that Ariosto renders the thoughts and oral expressions of his creatures with the free indirect style, thus becoming the first modern representative of our construction; preceding by a century and a half La Fontaine, retained until then—also by Lerch, Bally, Spitzer, and others—as the modern precursor of the free indirect." (This free indirect will then disappear for some centuries and reemerge only with Manzoni, "more to render the thoughts than the words of others": to create, that is, the Italian tradition of the naturalistic-romantic Free Indirect, strongly nominal and based upon the imperfect and the present: in other words, the lived imita-

tion of the speech of a character psychologically, not sociologically *other*—given that in Italy social difference fatally implies a difference of speech.)

Why is there this curious presence of the Free Indirect in Ariosto? Curious also because it is limited. Now the Free Indirect is one of those phenomena whose presence for a diagnostician is the proof of an ideology that cannot appear only in a few extreme cases but which completely characterizes the entire work. Either it is there or it isn't. That it does exist in Ariosto is a fact so historically significant and impressive that one cannot be limited to stating it as a curiosity or a title of merit with respect to La Fontaine. One sees that there has been a period in Italian society with characteristics which then were repeated in a vaster and more stable way a century and a half later in France, etc., etc.

It is certain that every time one has Free Indirect this implies a *sociological consciousness*, clear or otherwise, in the author, which seems to me the fundamental and constant characteristic of the Free Indirect.

The phenomenon is hidden within the internal mechanisms of Ariosto's own language. Its narrative rhythm of disengaged "cursus" and its prose lexicon, ironizing the medieval myth, come to constitute, with the sublime language of the epic, an alternative middle level (rather than humble) language. The coexistence is not one of tones: there isn't a tragic tone next to a comic tone. But the tragical and the comical are mixed: the synthesis or the antithesis plays in the depth of the language. Only a passionate analysis can establish its presence, through extralinguistic deductions, etc. In reality the language of Ariosto cannot be broken down: the shadings don't have breaks in continuity, and they form a mysterious continuity between feudal and middle-class language, between the language of arms and the language of commerce and banks. In this "emanation" that is the language of Ariosto, every consciousness is immanent: there is no shadow of transcendence, nor is there possibility of reflection.

But it is clear that the idea of a socially defined human type was present in the head of Ariosto: that it was he himself, then—clerk, administrator, possessor of a little house, etc., etc.

In the very act in which Ariosto thus fulfills his linguistic abasement and by lowering the language of poetry makes it approach the language of prose, he performs a first generic act of that operation that is lived linguistic mimesis. He leads the language of an idealized chivalry in the language of poetry back to his own ironic and skeptical middle-class level, with its rather limited economic and essential horizon (masked by the usual already classicist pretexts). By means of chivalry he profanes poetry itself; he begins that long

work of the erosion of humanism that will finish, in our days, with the degeneration into pragmatism, into *qualunquismo*, etc., etc.⁸ *The discourse that Ariosto reanimates is that of himself as middle-class man.* The sixty examples collected by Günther are sixty recognizable cases, but in reality there is no break in linguistic continuity between them and the rest of the poem: they are dryly grammatical in themselves—there is no particular expressive agitation. In short, they are almost ugly proofs that establish a presence: that of the possibility of the Free Indirect and of the ideology—conscious or not—that it implies. Ariosto has not distinguished his bourgeois characters from each other with psychological characteristics and social particulars. The “bourgeois” in his poem was [both] individual and symbolic: *in substance, I repeat, he himself as a bourgeois*; and the occurrence of the bourgeoisie in the various characters was ideal. The play is between high language and middle language: an infinite shading, where sociological consciousness is only a powerful shadow that throws shade over the rest and throws into relief the marvelous play of Ariostan irony.

I, however, would take from Ariosto the preeminence that Günther, followed by our scholar, attributes to him. It [free indirect discourse] is already there in Dante. And I limit myself to the example of Dante in order to follow scholastic habits honestly. Let us take two cases, the very first that come to mind: one on the elite psychological and social level, the other on the sordid psychological and social level. One of Contini’s very beautiful studies, the one on the Canto of Francesca,⁹ is illuminating insofar as it treats the elite level: all the language used by Dante in narrating the facts of Paolo and Francesca, including what is outside the direct discourse between quotation marks, is taken from the comic strips of the period (I hope that Contini won’t be offended by the boldness of the analogy). It is clear that to our ears it sounds flattened out, semantically, but the Continian reconstruction doesn’t leave doubts: Dante made use of linguistic materials belonging to a society, to an elite: slang. This he himself certainly didn’t use, either in his social circle or as a poet. The use is therefore mimetic, and if it isn’t a question of an actual mimesis realized grammatically, it is certainly a kind of emblematic Free Indirect, of which there is the stylistic condition, not the grammatical one which has since become common. It is lexical, rather, and sacrifices the expressiveness typical of the Free Indirect to the expressiveness deriving from the assimilation of the linguistic fabric of the narrator to the linguistic fabric of the characters—not as a technically abnormal means, but as one of many natural expressive means, so as not to disturb the dominant linguistic state of mind, which is very elevated and deprived of irony and sentimentalism.

On the other level we find a jargon of the underworld, or anyhow of the slums or of an area of ill repute. Certainly it is not Dante, in his social or his poetic context, who uses four-letter words or, at any rate, lively locutions ("give the finger," "make a trumpet out of an ass," etc., etc.). But in the act in which Dante represents figures of the equivocal world, here, without "living it," he suddenly constructs a kind of Free Indirect, lexical more than grammatical, and therefore more allusive than present and shouting: always setting it in the dominant linguistic fabric that would not admit the intrusions of others. If ever there was a book written in the first person, it is Dante's book, since it is an explicitly essay-like book, which implies an institutional world, the author's adherence to it, and his participation in it under the guise—we might call it extraliterary—of the most sincere and total commitment. The "sociological consciousness" comes into play here, too, as in Ariosto; first of all in the revolutionary relationship between the high language and the spoken language, that is, between the Latin of the theological culture and the Florentine of the communal bourgeoisie. The linguistic choice is the first symptom of a social conscience: it is, in fact, the choice of the modern world (the communal bourgeoisie) against the old world (the clerical-universalistic). The mimesis of the various possible special languages of bourgeois language is completely prefigured in this first choice, but, in contrast to Ariosto, Dante has a clear consciousness of social categories which is profoundly democratic (the language of Francesca, the language of the grafters), given his probable ascendancy to corporative experiences and their attendant social struggles.

It is impossible to understand certain forms of free indirect discourse in the last decades if you do not keep in mind that the middle-class language (spoken two or three generations ago by only five percent of Italians, and adapted from a literary function to a bureaucratic-governmental one through its use by a nonrevolutionary bourgeoisie of petty bosses)¹⁰ has not known how to maintain its "middleness" and has separated in two directions, one upwards, the other downwards. [This has happened] practically, through a sort of regressive recall toward its particular nature as literary, and thus fundamentally expressive, language. There has not been a real national culture, and therefore a middle language that could express it—outside of literature—as a democratic *res communis omnium*;^{*} it did not have a reason to exist, if not for merely pragmatic or pretextual and consequently rhetorical purposes.

Literature, in short—from the time of national unification on—

*Common property of all.—Ed.

has always been elusive, looking for its own reasons in itself, etc., etc., almost ignoring that in the meantime the language that for centuries had been only for literary use was becoming instrumentalized and was becoming the *spoken* language of a nation. So that there is no synchrony between the "Italian language" and the "Italian literary language" after unification. Only after the Resistance can one observe an impressive attempt at reunification of the two languages.

In the meantime the constitutional, inevitable fracture of the linguistic middle had produced that scheme of which I spoke [earlier]: either it exploded upwards or it exploded downwards, leaving the center, that is, the cultural positions, almost completely empty, in a graph made of points—up or down—of expressive stalactites.¹¹

Up above were symbolist, hermetic, and expressionistic systems; the semantic expansion, the development (with its baroque verbal function) of the subordinating structuration of literary Italian by means of "imitations" or "ironies" (I think of Gadda as the archetype).

Down below were naturalistic systems, imitations of sublinguistic or dialectal speech; vernacular poetry, etc., etc.

Until now all the analyses carried out on free indirect discourse in Italian remain unsatisfying *because they accepted as axiomatic a middle and normal level of (spoken and literary) Italian*, so that, for example, the author who chose to imitate a dialect would have departed from such a middle level and would have brought to it his dialectal, sublinguistic, deep, archaic materials.

It isn't true. Instead, it almost always happened that the author who performed this operation of "fishing in the deep and on the bottom" of the language was the same person who contemporaneously performed the precisely antithetical operation: that is, the work of supralinguistic expressive exaggeration.

So that—for his incursions, his mimesis in the lower strata of the language in the dialectal or dialectized sublanguages, or those spoken by special minute categories of the nation—he never departed from the middle line, but from the high line: and it was to the high line that he returned with his booty.

*Contamination did not happen between the low language and the middle language but between the low language and the high language.*¹² No one of those who have occupied themselves with free indirect discourse in Italian has taken into account such a precious form of contamination, has taken into account its function—not simply vivifying, but expressive at a high stylistic level.

There is, in a word, a type of free indirect discourse particular to the last decades of Italian literature in which the stylistic condition is not created through functional pretexts (the psychological or

sociological participation in the interior world of the character), but by the liking for style. It is this primacy of style that, reanimating the speech of others, causes the material recovered in such a manner to assume an expressive function. And it makes the middle language explode upwards with major violence: the incursion downwards thus remaining an episode—dramatic and irreversible, granted—of a more complex operative phenomenology.

This is not to say that the “sociological consciousness” of which I began to speak concerning the sixty Free Indirects of Ariosto implies sympathy: or, in more recent times, a Marxist, or socialist, or even Christian-social ideology.

In opposition to the idea of “sympathy,” there is also another of the “stylistic conditions” necessary to trigger the grammatical apparatus of free indirect discourse: that is, irony. But a special irony—certainly not the kind that Spitzer discusses as the principal and dominant sign of free indirect discourse (it ought to be defined rather as humor,* a gentle and light philosophy because of the fullness of its humanity; it manifests itself precisely in assuming literally the oral point of departure, the “tone” of voice of the speaker as the conducting wire of the *oratio obliqua*).† But irony in a specific, current sense: that is, the “caricatural mimesis” that consists in “mimicking” the speaker. So this is a very original position with respect to all the other traditional positions which the author uses to place himself in relation to his character: a correspondence of loving senses that is embodied in an exchange of linguistic ardors (it should be noted, as I will say in some notes further on, that it isn’t always the character who lends his language to the author, but it’s often the contrary!). In short, it’s also necessary to include a feeling of antipathy in the feelings that create the stylistic conditions of the *oratio obliqua*. Gadda is an archetype in this regard, too. He often mimics his characters in order to express his antipathy for them. If a neighbor annoys him with noise or talking he does a furious imitation of her, not dominated by an understanding and sympathetic spirit (which is nevertheless the dominant spirit of such procedures), but to bring to light from within the hateful and asocial elements.

Often such a scandalous free indirect discourse, due to a linguistic “sympathy” which is a human or social “antipathy,” is manifested in an explicitly political polemic: the rich [people] of Brechtian or Groszian ascendancy, for example (in texts that seem to me not yet to have attained literary honors, at least in Italy).

* Pasolini uses the English word “humor” here.—Ed.

† Indirect discourse.—Ed.

At this point in the reading of Herzeg's book, that is, at the definition, concerning Manzoni, that the Free Indirect can simply reproduce the thoughts of a character, and not his words, that is, the words with which he expresses his thoughts—I must observe contentiously that Herzeg and the scholars of stylistics whom he cites, with a partial exception made for Spitzer, implicitly accept an ontological phenomenology for the Free Indirect, that is, the identification or osmosis or, in any case, the rapport of sympathy between the author and the character, *as if their life experiences were the same*.

But it seems impossible to me to affirm that "reanimating" thoughts or "reanimating the particular discourse that expresses those thoughts" is the same phenomenon. An author can reanimate thoughts and not the words that express them only in a character who has at least his own upbringing, his own age, his own historical and cultural experience: in other words, who belongs to his world. Then a terrible thing happens: that person is united to the author by the substantial fact of belonging to his ideology.

The most odious and intolerable thing, even in the most innocent of bourgeois, is that of not knowing how to recognize life experiences other than his own: and of bringing all other life experiences back to a substantial analogy with his own. It is a real offense that he gives to other men in different social and historical conditions. Even a noble, elevated bourgeois writer, who doesn't know how to recognize the extreme characteristics of psychological diversity of a man whose life experiences differ from his, and who, on the contrary, believes that he can make them his by seeking substantial analogies—almost as if experiences other than his own weren't conceivable—performs an act that is the first step toward certain manifestations of the defense of his privileges and even toward racism. In this sense, he is no longer free but belongs to his class deterministically; there is no discontinuity between him and a police chief or an executioner in a concentration camp.

In the case where, in order to reanimate the thoughts of his character, an author is compelled to reanimate his words, it means that the words of the author and those of the character are not the same: the character lives, then, in another linguistic or psychological, or cultural, or historical world. He belongs to another social class. And the author therefore knows the world of that social class only through the character and his language.

An approach of another kind would be only sociological or scientific: an author would then know the aspects of reality about his character, his actual, practical reality relative to the rest of the world; but he would not know his real reality, inalienable and unrepeatable in other situations, not even analogous ones. In short, his life experience, his feeling about things.

In the case then where the author reanimates the pure and simple thoughts of his protagonist on the page, vivifying them in some way, he makes an "interior monologue," grammatically and stylistically. But if the words of the character aren't there along with the thoughts, there are two possibilities: either the author makes use of the character as a mechanical device, transforming the character into an objectified form of himself, and so the interior monologue thus organized is a forthright and sincere "subjective," or the author achieves a horrendous mystification, attributing his own language and his own morality to characters different from himself on his own social level, or even to characters belonging to another social class. And since such an author is naturally bourgeois, he thus achieves an unconscious and seditious identification of the whole world with the bourgeois world; and his character is nothing more than the concretion of his own ideological state, which makes any other unthinkable (in the natural presumption of his own superiority).

D'Annunzio conceives of interior monologues only in superior characters, and in this he is honest. Post-D'Annunzian bourgeois writers find ways of objectification—in reanimating thoughts but not words—through sentimentalism or moralism (that is, through a more or less conscious hypocrisy). Herczeg cites Pirandello and Cicognani almost exclusively in his study as typical examples of the Italian twentieth century (although in reality they are eccentric: further, there was little else to choose, given, in this historical period, the prevalence of the first person, which, by means of the highest linguistic choices, was placed at the center of the bourgeois universe as the site of interiority; and the prevailing, in short, of the "language of poetry" even in prose texts). But in the more recent writers of the twentieth century, in Italy (late, if the mythic case of Verga is excluded), for better or worse, class consciousness was added to the assimilation of all the world to the bourgeois world performed by the writer (to be interpreted as the other side of the assimilation imposed on literary products by bourgeois society). By this time Pirandello and Cicognani can no longer ignore, literally, that the characters who are their spokesmen—or the object of their nostalgia—belong to the petite bourgeoisie: therefore in "reanimating" their thoughts, by means of the grammatical form of the Free Indirect, they must stylistically adopt a certain amount of expressive vivacity, of quotations of middle-level spoken language, etc., etc. But all that is only an alibi to mask the terrible subjective functionality of the character: badly ideological or pseudo-problematic in Pirandello, nostalgic in Cicognani.

There is thus a break in continuity between the "interior monologue" and the "free indirect discourse," although, in great part, they

coincide—especially after the vague sociological consciousness becomes, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the consciousness of social classes.

In extreme cases the "interior monologue" can be written in the very language of the writer [and] attributed to a character by the writer (and the operation is honest and not mystifying when the character is explicitly declared to belong to the epoch, the culture, the social class of the author): and he can leave all naturalism out of consideration, often approaching the "language of poetry" almost as if it were a woven poem, like a Persian carpet, in a zone where the spirit of the author and the spirit of the character are fused.

Instead, still in extreme cases, "free indirect discourse" can only be written in a language substantially different from that of the writer, not leaving out of consideration a certain naturalism, or at least a certain scientific acquaintance with the other language; and poetry, as lyricism or expressiveness, is born of the blending in the collision of two, sometimes profoundly different, spirits.

Very little of contemporary Italian and European literature thus remains excluded from the area of free indirect discourse. If certain of its grammatical forms are in crisis (especially those of sentimental-naturalistic type, extremely vivacious and almost theatrical), it lends its internal structure to almost every narrative form. Naturally the various technical breakdowns brought about by an excess of technical research—by experimentalism of every sort—have reduced the particular techniques of the Free Indirect to stumps, fragments, and often irreconcilable allusions; mixing them together with other more striking expressive proceedings, according to all the canons of that type of literary communication that is defined by means of a recent but by now indispensable road sign—"writing." "Writing," beyond style and even the most free of the various techniques or genres, denies the various proceedings, crushing them into a continuous and simultaneous consciousness that becomes a simultaneous presence. It is, all told, a projection of the confusion of life in one of its monstrously synthetic moments, which does not, however, have the force of synthesis: it is synthesis as pure plurality and contemporaneity of possible techniques. It isn't always easy to recognize the presence of the Free Indirect in such an explosion of literary vitality. Nor is it easy, for example, to recognize the character through whom the author speaks in cases of avant-garde techniques that go still further beyond the supertechnique of "writing."

More on this in a later paragraph, however. Let us observe some clearer cases here. Perhaps because of that bit of clownishness and lack of politeness that is inevitable in someone who uses the Free

Indirect (it is finally the action of a mime, of one who has the histrionic qualities to mimic others, reproducing their language either with sympathy or with irony), Moravia has an instinctive hostility toward our procedure. Also because it is extremely "literary," so that the clown appears in a double-breasted suit (and here Moravia as metaphor is opposed to Gadda as metaphor). And yet, Moravia, even he, tends to assimilate every psychology to bourgeois psychology: risking that horrendous attempt against human dignity of which I spoke two or three paragraphs ago. Fortunately, the intelligence of the writer saves him; and it is a form of myth or nostalgia, no, not toward health, but toward a certain unattainable grace or gaiety of characters belonging to the people, which gives such characters a perspective implying another kind of life experience. Thus *Two Women* and almost all the one hundred and fifty or so Roman tales are classic examples of the Free Indirect.¹³ It is true that the character says "I." It is true that it is the *Ciocciara* herself who narrates and thus creates a direct discourse. But that is only a formality. In reality that *I* is a more convenient *he* of the Free Indirect, an Ariostan grace or lightness (the Ariostan function works much better in Moravia than does the Machiavellian function). The result is a mingling of the almost middle-level literary language of Moravia (elsewhere I have called it the "fiction of middle-level language") with the dialect or strongly dialectal Italian of the "*Ciocciara*."

[Moravia's] *The Empty Canvas* [1960] is also a single free indirect discourse from beginning to end: and the *I* here is also no more than a *he* who, in order to reanimate his thoughts better for the author, becomes *I*. And in fact there is a slight linguistic degeneration from Moravia's level to the level of Guido [the painter-protagonist of *The Empty Canvas*], who is slightly inferior to the author in culture and talent.

With Moravia, moreover, one can identify a new type of "stylistic condition" created by the author in order to proceed to the Free Indirect: that is, the device of expressing through the character the problem of an essay (in the case of Guido, the ideological impossibility of expressing himself and thus of living).

And Morante's *Arthur's Island* [1957], then, is also *oratio obliqua*, where the *he* is no more than an *I* who becomes *he* in order to reanimate her thoughts more objectively; because in the objectively realized longing to be a boy Morante expresses herself better by calling herself *he*. And so on: entire novels are no more than entire Free Indirects in that either there is a total identification of the author with a character, or the characters are a pseudo-objectification of the author, or the characters are devices for expressing the thesis of the author in a substantially unified language, or finally—

unconsciously—the characters perfectly inhabit in the same way the social and ideological world of the author (who in this manner often behaves with an arbitrariness conferred on him by his “superiority”).

On the side of “stylistic taste” and of “ironic mimesis” as stylistic conditions of the Free Indirect I would like to note a new type of condition that implies in the aristocratic *qualunquismo* of the process (that nevertheless, for example in Gadda, rediscovers its moral function in its own traumatic violence) a critical attitude—albeit an abnormal one. I mean to refer to the “pop” element in painting, but not out of frivolity; on the contrary, with a strictly functional purpose—if painting, too, must be included as well by this time, in some way, in the brief critical bibliography on the issue. In fact, for some decades now, the presence of a Free Indirect in painting, albeit a strongly contaminated one, has been traditional: the tradition took form with the avant-garde painting of the early twentieth century (collages of newspapers and other objects mixed with the traditional painting techniques of design and color), and now it is exploding, especially with pop art: the object, which the painter resorts to in order to enrich his text in an expressionistic-ironic way, is similar to a spoken fragment that an author reports, recorded in a highly expressive context of literary writing.

I don't believe an example in literature exists that corresponds perfectly to the pop element in painting (before certain avant-garde literature, on which see ahead). *But if it existed, what would it mean?* Evidently it would have a violently ironic value: in the middle of a complex and exquisite speech we would see a piece of brutal spoken reality, either petit-bourgeois or lower-class, slapped down. In short, it would be the usual form of antibourgeois revolt within the bourgeois sphere: the same as in the early twentieth century, but still with sociologically different characteristics nevertheless. And above all, with a different perspective on violence toward the future.

In other words, the bourgeois antibourgeois revolt of the early twentieth century had as its object the present society in its existential immediacy, for what it was, there and in that moment (and thus made possible an irony that was ultimately calmer, and a certain sense of optimism and security, not only toward its own critical operation but also toward an intrinsic autoregeneration of the social world under criticism: and in fact it was always still a matter of *good painting*). Today, instead, such criticism does not address itself only to the present: on the contrary, it is apocalyptic; it foresees the future—the system of allusiveness also includes the perspectives of future statistics.

It is infinitely more expressive and ironic (and less pictorial): however, its violence is more chilling because it also denies itself (like someone condemned to death who takes his life before being executed).

As a grammatical element of the Free Indirect, the pop element— instantaneous, inarticulate, unique and univocal, monolithic—is an iconoclastic presence. It isn't taken out of sympathy by the "speaker," or, to put it better, in the case of painting, by the "user": no. It is used with the same apocalyptic, objective indifference with which cultured material is used. A rent, a breach, is effected violently and brutally on such cultured material; from it the *other* material erupts which makes up the objectivity, the real texture of things—which escaped the intellectual poet and also in large part escaped man; it has become mechanical in its use by the masses of speakers and users, who are no longer the makers of history, but the products of history.

In short, the language is no longer that of the *character*, but that of the *reader!* The citation of a random fragment of such language—which is exceptional with respect to the work, which was traditionally addressed to a public of characters, by and large the same characters of a book or of a painting, as long as the world was one, that is, dominated by a humanistic idea of reality—thus sounds like an iconoclastic contradiction through its own presence, which is scandalous to the reader because he feels himself put in front of *his* true reality!¹⁴ This reality is absurd, then, because it belongs more to the future than to the present. The "innocent" masses, since they are deprived of critical ties with the past, accept such a future without defenses, and they already prefigure it in their way of life. But the mimetic intellectual, who reanimates this new way of life in the work, is only capable of grasping its distressing and ridiculous aspects (with respect to the past, to which he is still tied critically). He doesn't know how to grasp the shadings and the complications (in which life is really re-created) but [he only knows how to grasp] a naked syntagma, the unequivocal and terrible pop object.

The mimetic intellectual, generally speaking, then, could at one time renounce his own language and reanimate the speech of another, *provided that this other was a contemporary or better, much better, prehistoric with respect to him* (the most beautiful mimeses of the Free Indirect are those of their own bourgeois or petit-bourgeois fathers of a preceding mythic generation, or those in dialect). But now, because of an anguish that is made bearable only if it is apocalyptically ironic, as in pop art, *he cannot adopt the linguistic modes* of whoever is further ahead of him in history; that is, for example, the innocent and standardized masses of society in an advanced neocapitalistic phase. So that it can certainly be said that

the intellectual is by this time represented indiscriminately and necessarily as a traditionalist. Even the avant-garde movements are traditionalistic with respect to the true reality that is already beyond the threshold of the future, at least potentially.

There are also some elements of the lived pop discourse in the Italian avant-garde movements. Once abolished by the most extremist nonideological ideologists, every possible literary tradition, including the most recent (inasmuch as always in some sense crepuscular, sentimental—read: populist—aestheticizing, etc., etc.), up to the negation of all literature—the possibility of communicating by means of some written object on the one hand has become extremely restricted, since it is limited by an infinity of normative negations which are not devoid of moralism. On the other hand, it has become extremely new.

The page has become intensely and madly substantival, with the supremacy of combinations of the lexicon in the most purely and scandalously monosemic state possible—if every syntactical movement always risks presenting itself as a literary movement, prefigured by tradition. To abolish literature and tradition as forms of an inauthentic establishment it is clear that every stylistic decorum has to be abolished first, and then, even syntax: that it has not then been disintegrated or rendered abnormal by illegal usage or, in sum, in some way made iconoclastic but, precisely, completely abolished.

The text is thus presented as a “written thing” outside of every syntactic wrapping: this text is therefore completely set out on one single plane, like the strokes drawn by children or the writing of primitives. Different planes are created artificially with the help of typographic means and with the various combinations of that infinite series of substantives that are words outside of syntax.

This writing is presented as if liberated, practically outside of every possible calculation, from the series of forces whose equilibrium holds together a classical (syntactic-stylistic) linguistic system, as the equilibrium among the physical forces holds the universe together. Those innumerable forces that pull or push in all directions are, in a manner of speaking, the surviving “poles”; yes, precisely by means of tradition, which is a series of moments of overcoming, above and beyond negations: *and as such, beyond order, it is also chaos*. Syntax is the reproduction of the order and the chaos of linguistic history (the discovery of all the poles, whose force of attraction and repulsion holds together a syntactic period, would be the reconstruction of all history, etc., etc.).

In the moment in which a writer renounces the present and contemporaneous concretions of historical tradition, he must first of all perform a simplification: that is, a reduction of the poles that

hold together his "thing," which, if it isn't syntactic, is nevertheless written, and thus possesses at any rate nexes—if only mechanical ones—that make a totality out of the single monosemes. Without such forces in equilibrium the written thing would be dissolved centrifugally by the force of negation alone.

To substitute the incalculable number of poles that tradition offers for a linguistic system through syntax as a historical institution—both evolved and fixed in all its preceding fixations—the writers of new linguistic systems only have two "poles" (apart from those surviving in spite of themselves, in an elementary way in the lexicon, in the semantemes—however dissociated—in the fragmentation of the noun-adjective, substantive-verb relationships, etc., etc.). One pole is, precisely, negation, and the other is the myth of the future: their written things are presented as nonhistorical, and, together, as symbols of an immediate future history.

In this particular linguistic case, if we aren't deceiving ourselves, negation is a negation of the osmosis with Latin, and the myth is the myth of technological osmosis. In a word, man is understood in his prefiguration as "*homo technologicus*" (the classicism of Latin titles is a fatal product of the myth, even supposing that it's a secondary one; every mythicization can only be presented as substantially classicist).

On the basis of the negation of social and linguistic values of the past and of the present is implanted a kind of "mimesis" of values of the future, but naturally, very simplistically—given that every complication and profundity is assured to a new ideology by its contact with the infinite ideologies of the past—while, in the case of these written "things," the ambition of total innovation and the rejection of the past make the ideological "poles" which hold them together have an almost infantile roughness. However, these values of the future are seen through their mythicization: they are certainly not foreseen through the always demythicizing methodology of science, or at least of the real desire for knowledge. It can therefore be said that perhaps in part outside of their intentions—but certainly in keeping with the moralistic-negative violence of their normativity—at least three quarters of the number of their texts deprived of depth (even Sanguinetti is completely frontal and flat, like a neoclassicist) are an abnormal form of free indirect discourse.

That is to say, they write "speaking through the voice of . . ." and the voice is that of a mythic "*homo technologicus*" who, like an upside-down hero, is based on the negation of all that is past and present, and at the same time offers the possibility of crazy new polysemias, substituting itself for history in a surreptitious and sacred forecast of history.

A possible new "stylistic condition" for the Free Indirect, then, is

the hypothesis of a future world and of a future language—whose scientific and logical condition will never be reliable—while a certain degree of reliability can be reached through some form of writing: in our case, a kind of “already experienced discourse.”

The language spoken by the hypothetical “*homo technologicus*” and already experienced by the avant-garde movements is based above all on the negation of the current language: it is expressed through an arbitrary and approximate destruction—*a fortiori*,* the real decline of a language being unforeseeable: therefore a kind of symbolic destruction of language takes place through a transformation of language into echolalia. But how? By substituting for “literary figures,” that vaguely maintain their more recent hermetic-expressionistic physiognomy, analogous figures (meters, typographic aspects, etc.) made with casual, iconoclastic material. But, and here is the point, this material is sometimes taken in bulk, as in pop art, from technical systems of a world so contemporary as to trespass on the future: for example, if you will, from journalistic systems of mass diffusion—exactly antithetical to the classical cultural communication of the elite, etc.—and, for example, through the manipulation of electronic machines (as Balestrini has done in a significant way). The result is the simultaneous presence of a fictitiously destroyed language and a fictitiously reconstructed language in the “already experienced discourse”: in a word, it’s a question of a hypothesis, that is, of a procedure [that is] the complete reverse of scientific procedures.

In short, there is also in the avant-garde movements of the sixties that kind of scientific naivete that used to characterize certain avant-garde movements of the beginning of the century: but while the futurists, for example, exalted science as the product of bourgeois society—whose mean and conservative part they condemned, but with whose aristocratic and dynamic part they identified—the avant-gardists of today, I would say, *mythicize science as applied science*, and, as such, as the modifier of society precisely in a paligenetic sense. In the avant-garde movements’ collages and in their lexical and typographic combinations without shadows and depths the mimesis of the spoken language of a coming man, “redeemed” by practical science, runs as a unitary element.

In sum: the traditional language, which we can have arrive up to a point *almost* contemporary with us (writers), is a language A, that I wish—*per absurdum*†—to consider along with the avant-garde movements as having fallen by the wayside. This *almost* corre-

*For a still stronger reason.—Ed.

†Ridiculously.—Ed.

sponds to approximately the first years of the sixties, a moment in which the presence of Italy on a worldwide level of neocapitalistic evolution was resoundingly demonstrated (the North of Italy: the South remaining implied in all that, from new types of infrastructures of the base and a new type of urbanism—for example, in Turin immigrants no longer learn the Turinese dialect of the workers of Fiat, but their dialectized and technicized Italian). Such a phenomenon has involved a diachrony between writers and reality. The target has begun to move under their linguistic sights and escaped them. I could give infinite concrete examples of this “decadence” of language A: I will give three of them.

Bassani had in his very precise gold sights, similar to those of a watchmaker in a fable, the world of the Jewish professional petite bourgeoisie of Ferrara. He invented this world, setting out from an actual social reality, using classical Free Indirects with the same pathetic care with which he cited classical allocutions, classical lexical modes, very parenthetical forms of classical syntax attributed by his nostalgia to an ideal cultivated society, and—although restricted—infinately worthy of respect and mythic fervor (the red of the walls, the vistas of rockstrewn streets, etc., etc., are figurative elements that have the absoluteness of much great painting by minor figures, etc., etc.). Moreover, the frequent citations of “spoken language,” attributed objectively to grandfathers who are professionals and to afflicted fathers, make of Bassani’s Ferrarese book a continuous network of flashing indirects, contained within the brief circuit of a citation of spoken language that obsessively intersects with the fabric of the book (with its normal moments of a traditionally reanimated discourse, etc., etc.). Well. The world which Bassani is referring to, and which furnished the reality for his myth, is gone. A new type of bourgeoisie, probably in this very Ferrara, has pushed the Bassanian world back and to the edges: [this new bourgeoisie] has brought about its fall by making it outdated, and in some way, in the most extreme case, by ridiculing it like all the things that begin to turn yellow [around the edges].

Certainly the bourgeoisie described by Bassani continues to exist: it isn’t extinct. But it is found in the backward areas of society, and since the “circulation and consumption of ideas” is very rapid in our time, delays immediately become irreparable.

The Roman “*generone*,”¹⁵ too, the equivalent of the commercial and professional bourgeoisie of Ferrara emanating from the heart of an idealized but in reality ferocious nineteenth century will presumably have a very slow death agony. Nevertheless, for anyone who looks at things without pity, as a judge of what is and what is not current, the “*generone*” is out of bounds. Like the absolutely honest and Hamlet-like Ferrarese professionals, the fat and cynical

Roman businessmen have become, in the space of a few years, characters in costume. The topicality of the references to this world, as a problem in some way alive in the Italian mosaic, as an object of accusation, etc., etc., effected by Moravia in some of his narratives, no longer exists. Interest has been shifted completely to another type of bourgeoisie whose personal characteristics are read much better in books of American sociology than in the "out-of-date" fantasy of Italian writers.

The third example is personal. That very large section of Italian society which comprises the subproletariat (Roman, in this particular case, but ideally including both that of the capitals of the South and that of the rural South), which was the object of such a burning interest in the fifties, now, although none of its problems has been resolved, and its conditions of life are practically the same, is no longer of interest. And not for shabby reasons, for a delirium of topicality, but because interest has shifted for such an objective and impressive mass of historical and social reasons toward other problems (those of the complete industrialization of Italy, in evolution toward high neocapitalistic levels, and toward the dream of a technocracy on the way to being realized) that it is natural that all the other problems fall off and appear to be archaic.

In the most diverse modes all these aspects of reality have been expressed by means of language A. The passing of those aspects is the passing of an era, and thus the passing of that language—since every language is always a metaphor for an epoch of history and of society, etc., etc.

The reasons for the "zero moment" of the Italian avant-garde movements have an air which is also slightly archaic and which slightly embarrasses whoever, like me, is convinced that the new avant-garde movements are something very different from the avant-garde movements of the beginning of the century. The "zero moment" understood as a metaphysical crisis, as a personal-collective "*débâcle*," etc., etc., to be explored and resolved in the darkness of the conscience, resorting to anarchic and irrationalistic psychological and sociopsychological apparatuses and implying a "starting from scratch" of vaguely Rimbaudian ancestry whose formulas are there, already prepared, extremely and boldly alive—they* cause the definition of that "zero moment" to turn out to be profoundly insincere.

Nevertheless, the hypothesis of the death of language A can be accepted.

Through the operations that I have described in the preceding paragraph the avant-garde movements thus postulate the reality of a

*[all the above-named apparatuses]

language B. They postulate it; they do not ensure it. They work unscientifically on such a hypothesis, and such a linguistic hypothesis is based on a myth: it is the precise duty of a writer to prefigure a future society whose aspects are in some way foreseeable and which functions otherwise for an anthropologist. This idea of the "duty to prefigure" is the Jansenist normativity of those avant-garde groups, their moral blackmail. And this monstrous form of ethics, of "commitment," is not without some logic. It is clear that if language A has fallen by the wayside, exhausting its function as metaphor, a language B must exist: and there remains nothing else for a writer to do but to seek to learn it, even if learning it means in some way having to guess it through the implication of a mythic idea of the future (cf. once again the preceding paragraph).

Reality, however, is something else. The real problem is no longer a language A (which, in the most extreme case, has fallen by the wayside) and is not even a language B (proposed insincerely to resolve a conventional and fictitious "zero moment"). The real problem is a language X, which is no other than the language A in the act of really becoming a language B. In other words it is our own language in evolution, through phases which are dramatic and difficult to analyze; and that, being in an acute moment of its evolution, is in chaotic movement and therefore escapes every possible observation, therewith being the perfect metaphor of a society that is evolving at a velocity never known until now, not even in moments of the most difficult transitions or crises. The "zero moment" is objectively constituted by this "rapidity and unrecognizability of the movement of society in evolution": that perhaps only sociologists succeed in grasping through statistics but nevertheless without giving them the concreteness that is a complication (and the only moment of the avant-garde movements that is in some way scientific is the knowledge of such sociological surveys).

To have thus led the problem back to its still most elementary scientific terms is on my part an abstract operation. It is true that for a linguistic observer there can only be a "language in evolution" (and not two languages, one dead and one future), to which the means of linguistic diffusion—newspapers, radio, television, etc.—impart a velocity with which linguists, in their bus,¹⁶ cannot keep up and that, moreover, they have never experienced; and it is true that the "zero moment" is nothing more than the anxious projection within our consciousness of a (numerically very high) moment of a reality that, in its evolution, escapes us. But all these are observations that imply a single, moreover obvious, fact: the only possible position in the presence of the evolution of a society and of its language is the scientific one. Now, although it may be doubted that the writer is a

scientist, and it may, on the contrary, be sustained that—all told—the forces of anguish prevail in him over those of reason, one cannot deny that the ideological unity of an Italian writer at the dawn of the sixties is assured by the fundamental scientificness which consists of his Marxist analysis of reality. Thus it is precisely within the sphere of this Marxist analysis—in evolution with respect to those obvious but so poetic analyses of the fifties—that the presence of another type of Free Indirect appears: the attempt to make the technological language of the new type of workers and bosses fit into the language of the writer.

Chaplin in *Modern Times* [1936] made a model-demythification of "*homo technologicus*," opposing himself to it in the only way that appears possible; that is, as survivor of a preindustrial humanity. Having entered into a factory Chaplin contradicted technology (and thus made it become part of his linguistic-expressive world), since he, surviving from another civilization and conserving its customs, madly and comically emphasized the inexpressiveness of the world of technology.

The stylistic technique of *Modern Times*, in my opinion, has not been surpassed. Theoretically it could be said that such a contradiction (the expressiveness of Chaplin against the inexpressiveness of the machines) should be ideologized today by presenting the expressive man *no longer* as survival but as evolution: it has been (a manual would say) the point of view of the worker—elaborated and complicated, so far as we are concerned, by the writer—who has projected into reality, demystifying it, the capitalistic industrialization of the world. So it should still be the point of view of the worker to demystify technicization.

But meanwhile it is urgent to note that if freedom is manifested only partially in the capitalistic world, thanks to the diversity of its levels (the coexistence of archaic forms of life, of underdeveloped regions and nations, etc.), *the technicization will be definitively leveling*: indeed, it already appears substantially as potential leveling. So that the language and culture of the technocrat already tend to be the language and culture of the worker. In other words: so long as the technological vocabulary is only one of many specialized jargons of a language, the other parts of the language tranquilly enjoy their partial freedom (for example, in *The Chair-Mender* of Ottieri, the technological jargon of the bosses is treated precisely as a particularistic jargon according to Chaplin's stylistic procedure).¹⁷ However, when an entire language is "assimilated and modified" by the language of technology, *presumably the phenomenon that today is only verified inside a factory will be re-created in all aspects of*

social life: the identification of the language of the technocrat with the language of the worker, and the subsequent suppression of the margin of freedom assured by the various linguistic levels.

I am not aware, in fact, that the interior discourse of a worker has been "reanimated" with his language as the specific language of the worker. In literary works dedicated to the study of the working-class situation at the beginning of the technological era, the protagonist, the worker, always finished by being drawn away from the factory and being substantially "reanimated" in some other moment of his day: for example: (1) in his private, familiar, daily life (the most recalcitrant, presumably, to possible osmosis with technological language); (2) in a state of sympathy with the life of the author through various forms of neurosis—albeit allegorical (Albino Saluggia of the *Memorial* of Volponi);¹⁸ (3) in a typically working-class situation with all the working-class, apocalyptic, and redemptive emphases this involves; that is, in other linguistic moments, however strictly typical of the worker (the national common language of political speeches; the literary language of commitment; or the language of a working-class-union situation; and this is the case of greatest significance in the attempt to make the worker speak in his own language).

Now I would say that the deep reason for this "impossibility of imitation" is precisely the potential identification of the language of the worker with the language of the factory. An impossibility that is presented as the prefigurer of future linguistic situations, considerably more serious than those pertaining to the world of literary languages. It seems that one cannot "make" the factory "speak," exploit its language, find a margin of freedom there, reanimate it. This is the problem.

Notes

1. *Lo stile indiretto libero in italiano* (Florence, 1963).
2. *L'infinitif de narration dans les langues romanes; étude de syntaxe historique* (Uppsala, 1936).
3. Pasolini cites the opening lines of Leporello's aria in the first act of *Don Giovanni*.
4. See "New Linguistic Questions," n. 13, for a discussion of the verb *rivivere*.
5. Pasolini refers to two fictive protagonists, Oscar Matzerath in Günter Grass's novel *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*, 1959), and Anteo Crocioni in Paolo Volponi's *La macchina mondiale* (*The World Machine*, 1965). Both are outsider figures, Matzerath as a dwarf and Crocioni as a visionary whose idea of a technological solution to world problems destroys him.
6. Tommaso Puzzilli is the slum-dwelling protagonist of Pasolini's novel *Una vita violenta* (*A Violent Life*, 1959); the Malavoglia are the Sicilian

family of Verga's most famous novel *I Malavoglia* (1881), translated as *The House under the Medlar Tree*.

7. Werner Günther, *Probleme der Rededarstellung: Untersuchungen zur direkten, indirekten und "erlebten" Rede im Deutschen, Französischen und Italienischen* (Marburg, 1928).

8. See "An Article in *Il Giorno*," n. 11, for *qualunque*.

9. Gianfranco Contini, "Dante come personaggio-poeta della Commedia," in *Varianti e altra linguistica* (Turin, 1970), pp. 343-48.

10. *Padrone*, translated here as "boss," is a highly charged and politicized word referring to the exploitative class of employers and proprietors.

11. Pasolini discusses this graph in detail in "New Linguistic Questions," pp. 4-6.

12. See Introduction, pp. xviii-xix, for a discussion of Pasolini's use of "contamination."

13. *La Ciociara* (1957), translated as *Two Women; Racconti romani* (1954), translated as *Roman Tales*. The Ciociaria is a region of Lazio, the province of Rome.

14. This is a typical Pasolinian sentence in which a long interruptive middle consisting of a number of short units makes it difficult to follow the thought. The main clause indicates that a fragment of the "pop" language Pasolini is discussing confronts the reader with his own reality and therefore "scandalizes" him. Such fragments remain violent intrusions into the work as a whole and are thus iconoclastic. In the middle of the sentence Pasolini describes the contrasting premodern condition of cultural uniformity, i.e., the humanistic perspective, in which harmony obtained between the world of the reader and the world of the artwork.

15. Name for the new Roman bourgeois of the last decades of the nineteenth century who competed with the aristocracy in ostentation.

16. Pasolini's comparison between the bus and the mass media, the second a force whose speed and diffusion cannot be matched by the first, suggests the impotence of linguists to affect the course of the language or even to keep up with its changes.

17. Pasolini gives an example of such jargon in *The Chair-Mender* in "New Linguistic Questions," pp. 15-16.

18. Albino Saluggia is mentioned by Pasolini in "New Linguistic Questions"; see p. 10 and n. 14.

The interest of these notes of mine is purely contemporary and Italian: they are merely a very limited contribution to the "fortune" of Dante in Italy in the last ten or fifteen years (in other than academic or specialized literature).

1) It will be necessary to keep in mind that with Dante we are not only in the presence of the discovery of the language, but in the presence of the discovery of *the languages*. In the act in which the will was born in Dante to use the common language of the Florentine bourgeoisie for the *Commedia*, the will was also born to understand the various sublanguages by which it was formed: jargons, specialized languages, elitist predilections, foreign language contributions, and quotations, etc., etc. Due to the upward movement of Dante's point of view, medieval theological universalism, his linguistic expansion is an enlargement not only of the lexical and expressive horizon, but at the same time of the social horizon.

Every time that there is the presence or the possibility of Free Indirect Discourse in a work this means that here there is at least a vague, possible "sociological awareness," if one assumes that it is inconceivable to reanimate¹ the speech of others linguistically without having given concrete form not only to its psychology but also to its particular social condition—the one that produces linguistic differences. Now in Dante there is the potential presence of Free Indirect Discourse, and not only potential, if one understands the use of the Free Indirect in a manner which is not strictly grammatical.

First of all, the direct discourses of Dante, those enclosed in quotation marks, imply a lexical solution of reanimated indirect discourse. In fact, the characters never speak like Dante. Certainly not in a strictly naturalistic sense; the naturalistic mimesis is always metaphorized in a poem whose central theme is the relationship of a "first person" to the transcendent world. However, if the characters belong to the same social class, to the same intellectual elite or specialized culture, to the same epoch or generation as Dante, their language is not differentiated from that of the author as linguistic institution. The differentiation is only psychological, and it therefore concerns style more than language. It is an expressive fact.

If, instead, the characters belong to another social class, to another

cultural world, to another epoch from that of Dante, then their "speech" is also characterized linguistically; from the extreme case in which a Provençal poet speaks for an entire hendecasyllable in his own language to the infinite instances in which one perceives, between the quotation marks of direct discourse, some specific signs of special languages.

It is sufficient to dissolve those direct discourses into relative clauses, with a *that*, and then to remove the *that*, and suddenly one has "reanimated discourses" at the bottom of whose "stylistic conditions" there is always a substantial sociological awareness.

But there is more. In the episode of Paolo and Francesca, for example, according to the amazing philological reconstruction of Gianfranco Contini, it is clear that in the tale Dante uses "fashionable" terms and expressions from texts which correspond more or less to our escapist literature; they were the reading matter of the elegant and aristocratic world. It is clear that Dante himself was not a user of such expressions; his is therefore a quotation from another linguistic world—that of his characters. On Dante's part this means a total immersion in and a "mimesis" of the psychology and the social habits of his characters. And therefore a contamination between the two languages.² It obviously isn't a question of an actual Free Indirect Discourse in the grammatical sense. One can speak of a Free Indirect that is symbolic or metaphoric: such as [can] be raised to a linguistic level which naturally used to resist, even in its enormous availability—always strictly economical, however—excessively lively experiments (which is precisely what mimetically reanimating the speech of others consists of). Expressions such as "give the finger," "make a trumpet out of an ass," or words such as "bucks" are also not part of Dante's vocabulary; they belong to the linguistic circle of the outskirts of town or the slums—in any case, of simple and plebeian people, perhaps given to a life of crime (in short, what in Italy Engels called a "*Lazarionitum*").³ These expressions then are also mimetic and are used by Dante to sketch in two lines an entire possible Free Indirect in which to re-create both psychologically and socially the reality of his lower-class, culturally deprived characters.

The choice of the Florentine "vulgate" as historical-linguistic entity to oppose in toto to Latin as written cultural language is thus in the end less important, or in any case less interesting, than the various choices which Dante made within the vulgate itself. He was fighting on two fronts: the universal theoretical and ideological opposition to Latin, and the specific theoretical and ideological opposition to a potential conformist institutionalization of the vulgate itself.

Probably the will to use the vulgate was born in Dante as a result

of his corporative consciousness in the context of the Florentine municipality, and the will to use the various sublanguages of the vulgate was born in him out of the archetypes of his direct and active participation in the complicated sociopolitical struggles of his city. He was not, in other words, immersed in a monolithic world which leveled everything, as theological-clerical universalism (read: Latin) had done during the entire Middle Ages. But what may be called Goldmann's law of homology caused the projection of Dante's particular social world to be an analytical one, divided by various contradictory sociopolitical, and therefore linguistic, characteristics (a situation that also repeats itself today in Italian society).⁴

The Dantesque plurilingualism, following the splendid essay by Contini which described it, has become in the possibly rigid interpretation of certain "committed" Italian writers of the fifties a prefigurative and retroactive "function" of Italian literature.⁵ Certainly it is true that Contini's interpretation of the Thomistic and transcendent upward shift of the "point of view" explains it in such a manner as to enlarge the lexical horizon in a panoramic simultaneous presence of its extreme instances (for example, on the cultured side, as a result of a sort of stylistic re-Romanization, "pretty"; all the "dirty words" on the plebeian side). But Contini's explanation—which in some way accentuates Dante's theological-universalistic position—must be carefully integrated by always keeping in mind the concrete manifestation of that point of view: that is, a society that by then impetuously required a "social conscience" of those who lived in it, without which the plurilinguistic expansion would have been merely numerical, or expressive—a marvelous linguistic ecstasy which, contemplating all words in their functionality and in their beauty, was the metaphor of a contemplation of God, etc., etc. Instead, no: the point of view was double—and contradictory. To the point of view from above there was a corresponding point of view from below, at the level of the most contingent and least transcendent earthly quality of things.

And it is strange how, in the aesthetic idea we have of Dante (as we have it in our memory, for example, of a city or a landscape), one point of view does not exclude the other; I cannot say if my Dante is the one who from the height of a Thomistic heaven lends his readers an immense and understanding glance at the world, or if he is the one who, along the alleys of the towns and the erosion furrows of the Apennines, analytically observes the world case by case. Whether he is the inventor of a "Universal Vulgate" or the inaugurator of a "Vulgate as Florentine *Langue*, with all its historical sublanguages."

2) The other thing which we must keep in mind is a later interpretation by Contini.⁶ That of the "two [vocal] registers." In Dante,

to explain myself in the simplest of terms, the story is developed according to two "registers": one is rapid, hurried almost to the point of being inexpressive, almost brutally factual. Read, for example, with the reading rhythm with which you normally read a work of fiction, the episode of Pia dei Tolomei.⁷ You have no sooner started it than it is already finished, perhaps you haven't even been aware that you have read it, etc., etc. Almost as if it were a scrap of an "opera libretto" which suggests feelings and facts with excited approximation rather than saying them. Then read the same passage concerning Pia again: in the rereading (or in reciting it by heart) the rhythm is that of the *other* register: the extremely slow, atemporal rhythm which is inscribed in a tempo which is neither that of the reading nor that of the facts, but the metahistorical tempo of poetry—its "slow motion" typical of a sublime epigraph, its chaste and almost whispered, endless high C from the chest.

The "double nature" of Dante's poem also makes itself explicit in other terms beyond that of the two points of view (the theological one and the sociological one) and those of the rapid register—"in the tempo of things"—and the slow register—"outside the tempo of things."

This time it is a question of terms which are more simply technical. (1) Dante's poem is an allegory and therefore, precisely as such, it is a coexistence of the two natures of figurative narration and symbolic narration. (2) Dante is the writer of his poem, but he is also its protagonist. Dante as writer represents a metaphysical world, with all its theological and cultural implications, but Dante as protagonist simply visits and remembers a world of the dead. (3) The *Commedia* is a poem, and as such, at least in our modern eyes, appears as a mixture of novel and poem: the nature of the novel can be physically represented by the "language of prose," while the nature of poetry is, obviously, represented by the language of poetry. Now these two languages, simultaneously present in every civil linguistic situation, are not of their own nature synchronic. On the contrary, all things considered, they could be said to be irreconcilable. The "internal forms" which are the psychologies of the characters, such as they appear upon completion of the reading, are, in Dante, of a formally novelistic type—that is, rational—and not formally poetic—that is, intuitive. Dante's great characters have the "duration" of the great characters conceived in prose; they are caught in their—albeit synthetic, and even stupendously synthetic—logical evolution, followed in movement by psychological penetration, human compassion, and moral judgment; that is, at the same time by a deeply objectifying social glance. They are never

projected with the hallucinatory immediacy of poetry, which fixes the images in an absolute, inalienable moment that is also un-analyzable, stupendously arbitrary, and impressionistic.

Even the minor figures—always rendered with a supreme poetic precision—do not escape the prose rationalism of Dante. They, too, are calculated, like the metaphysical topography, the regularity of the cantos and verses, etc. In other words, they fall within the internal eschatological plan of the poem. But here, too, we have a case similar to that of the "points of view" and of the "registers." In Dante's riddle there is no norm which establishes any order in the use of the language of prose and the language of poetry in a given instance. Reread the episode of Pia once again from this perspective. The "internal form" of Pia's psychology (synthetic to the extreme) is perfectly rational, even though it is a biography written on a tombstone, but it is the language of the poetry which "*a fortiori*" expresses all this in concrete terms through a series of anomalous alliterations, of antitheses which can be catalogued only with difficulty (*dis-fecemi* [un-made me], *in-anellata* [be-ringed], *di-sposando* [be-spoused]), of strangely sung popular rhythmic accents—almost melodramatic ("Remember me, who am La Pia," which is the hendecasyllable of a monodic, monostrophic song of central Italy). If it [the language of poetry] does not contradict that rationality it does, however, open it toward undefinable irrationalistic ambiguities.

The "double nature" of Dante's poem thus presents itself—but we could probably continue—under the guise of this series of dichotomies: "theological point of view" and "slow register," "figurative reality" and "allegorical reality," "Dante as narrator" and "Dante as character," "language of prose" and "language of poetry."

Lining up all these theses on one side and all these antitheses on the other, we establish two series within which Dante's poetic endeavor takes place.

The first series, as one can see, is sufficiently coherent: the point of view of theological and transcendent synthesis implies a strict anti-aesthetic or a-aesthetic functionality; hence, on the one hand, the rapid register which goes directly to the predetermined goal, which is meant to exhaust the areas reserved with unfringeable regularity to a given subject, etc., etc., and, on the other, the rationalistic planning of the psychologies and of the characters of the poem, never abandoned to fancy, to immediate inspiration. The whole dominated by the magical-universalistic sign of allegory and told by Dante the narrator with a certain "official tone" and an at times too solemn gravity.

All things considered, the second series is also tenable. It is the perspective from *within* the public world of Florence—with its great political events, its violent human situations, its unrecountable

details of life—which can generate that irrationalistic congestion which is the subject matter of the elevated and mysterious “poetic fixations.” Hence the “slow register,” which coincides in Dante (as in Petrarch) with the most typical moments of the “language of poetry.” And it is that same immediate and human experience which provides the allegory with the nature of figurative reality, lived existentially by Dante the character.

Now, was there in Dante the will to be a poet? Poet, I mean, as poet? And what was this will, and where was it?

To try to answer this question means considering the rereading of Dante as a sort of examination of one's conscience. Because, during the brief period of a long postwar era, the “fortune” of Dante in Italy—in a “small coterie,” still burning with interests not yet matured into the textbooks—has consisted in a “plurilinguistic dimension” as a guarantee of realism, on the one hand, and, on the other, as a guarantee of ideological inspiration, of writing conceived outside every direct poetic volition (which had characterized the marginal Italian area of twentieth-century European literature).

But in the meantime, a noncritical observation must be put forward at once: in all of Dante's poem there is an unconscious poetic will, understood as unconscious will precisely to create poetry as poetry (it is Auerbach who, in his little golden book of synopses of comparative romance literary stories, elects Villon “first poet as such”),⁸ and such a will—it must be added—is of its own nature an anomalous and mysterious will, rather close—so say we, who are conversant with Freud and much less free than our ancestors—to forms of paranoia or schizophrenia. The terrifying unity of the language of Dante is, I believe, a unique case in all the known literary histories. And it is an inexplicable unity, if one thinks about the double nature of his poem, which I have tried to identify in various antithetical terms, but which in reality has been the major problem of all the history of Dante criticism. A bit like the coexistence of human and divine nature in Christ being the major problem of evangelical exegesis (I cannot think of a more apt archetype for the *Commedia*, albeit one so different). The contrast between the two series of principles which preside over Dante's linguistic operation *would not allow any* possible linguistic unity, unless one of the series were to reveal itself to be surreptitious and pretextual, leaving to the other all the sincerity and authenticity. But this has not been demonstrated, nor is it in the process of being demonstrated. The poetic unity of the *Commedia*, which, I repeat, has something terrible and, in its sublime fascination, something which cannot be consumed, something which is alien, presents itself as an unrelated whole; it is—I repeat, I presume—an unconscious will, a natural

biolinguistic system. On this road we are in the dark and "gnashing our teeth"; it is best to abandon it.

Rather than *if there is*, it would be better then to ask ourselves *where* Dante's will to make poetry is to be found. If linguistic unity, the principle to which the synthesis between two such extraordinary antithetical series is due, it remains completely unreachable through extratextual research.

The "points" of the text where the "direct will to poetry" is revealed, however, cannot all be verified on one side or the other of the two antithetical series, nor even less along the line of some unifying principle (which may not be ontological); thus, I suppose we are confronted with a fairly valid working hypothesis, one which foresees an analysis of those "points" *along the suture* where the two opposed series are joined or clash, and where, therefore, expressiveness finds its most acute or most unstable moments.

Magical hypothesis! Its application, albeit schematic and impatient, in the part of the laboratory dedicated to more specifically linguistic observations, seems to me to have overturned one entire segment of Dantesque interpretation of the militant Italian culture of recent years.

In fact, the sociolinguistic relationship among the various languages which make up the Florentine vulgate as the real language of complex society, along the suture which draws together two languages which are socially very different from each other, should be highly dramatic—dramatic, I say, in expressive terms. Therefore, let us assume, absurdly, that in one passage of the poem we find side by side the usual cultivated expression "pretty," which has actually become obsolete because it is too literate, and the usual affective-familiar-plebeian word "bucks." The morphological juxtaposition would be an explosion of expressiveness ("the pretty bucks!"). But a juxtaposition of this kind *is never found* in the *Commedia*. It is only a mere possibility.

It is therefore true that there is in Dante the coexistence of two different and opposite sociolexical series, but each of the two always stays in its place, each falls within the limits of a given kind—that is, within the limits of an ideal "stylistic condition" to reanimate emblematically the particular language of a given character (or environment). Only "in rethinking" the *Commedia* does one take into account the simultaneous presence of two such different lexical series. Thus, the juxtaposition exists only in our head.

Such a juxtaposition would also be verifiable in the text if Dante were to free the two lexical terms from their socially evocative function (the potential Free Indirect) and use them arbitrarily, making them his own. In that case a gratuitous expressive friction beyond the limits of any functionality would occur; the bare and

crude "will to create expressiveness" would then explode (as in so much contemporary European literature). But juxtapositions of this kind, I repeat, do not exist; Dantesque plurilingualism is well ordered; every language, obtained functionally, remains in its place.

If, however, we do not want to abandon completely the idea of Dantesque plurilinguistic expressiveness so dear to our habits of these years, we can ascribe it to the pure and simple presence of strongly differentiated words which are scandalous with respect to the high vulgate; nothing more. That is, no expressionistic clash among them.

Perhaps our working hypothesis will reveal itself to be more fruitful if we search for the points of friction, of scandal, of expressive instability (where the direct will to poetry may be discovered), along the line where the leap of quality of the two "registers" takes place.

It must be remembered once more that it is the theological point of view, insofar as it is functional, which gives the poem its rapid rhythms, its pitiless and content-oriented eschatology; while it is the earthly point of view, with its immediate human interests—political, literary, linguistic, religious struggles—which causes the gaze also to pause with infinite cognitive possibility on the things of the world, fixing them in a manner which is irrational and rationally impossible to analyze, which incises the hendecasyllables of the "slow register" (which, in the final analysis, are virtually all the hendecasyllables of the poem, but *in isolation*) as if outside the poem, in the physical fixity of poetic eternity.

Dante's will to be a poet could therefore be discovered in the always consistent accent in all these "lapidary inscriptions" which make up a real reading of the *Commedia* (which is, after all, the traditional one of the thousand passages committed to memory). In this case, however, one must admit that, either because he willed it so or because of our understanding of them, they are placed on a level of pure irrationality because those "poetic eternities" (through which the *Commedia* "re-creates itself" outside itself) are the same which escape analysis in Petrarch's more "noble and selective" sonnets—when one stresses, in the sense of moral and cognitive elevation, that *choice* which in Petrarch is essentially sensuous and literary.

In short, we are in the presence of a double series of contradictions.

A) In a linguistic sense: the will to be a poet would appear in Dante in the expressive moment, that is, in the culminating moments of an expressiveness owed to the heteronomous presence, where poetry is concerned, of theology. But all this contradicts the

fact that the "will to be a poet" can be traced even better in the supreme moments of the metahistorical "slow motion" (that is, in the most contradictory instant with respect to the theological inspiration—which is what generates the rapid, content-oriented instance).

B) In a political-theological sense, the analogous contradiction is this: the raising of the point of view widens the linguistic horizon and ensures expressiveness and realism to the language (thus a secular and antitheological aspect); but at the same time, as we have seen, the absolute fixity of the "slow" verses escapes the principle of universalistic-theological rationalism, precisely because it is the final product of a human point of view that, in itself, was nothing more than a direct experience, a pragmatism which cannot be rationalized. And for this, as I was saying, those verses come within the ontological zone of ineffability and of irrationalism.

The true sacred moment of Dante would then not consist of his rational theological consciousness but would manifest itself in poetic terms, thus becoming secular and in some way literary, *authentically "reexamining" the metahistorical nature of religion by rendering historical a "poetic irrationality."*

Now, such a "poetic irrationality" (of which we do not know the real principle), the most reliable characteristic that we can predict, is the obsessive tonal unity of the poem, which is never given by the use of words, which are more or less centrifugal with respect to the center of inspiration, but is given by the regular and in some manner preconstituted position which they assume in the discourse. Practically, *from the discrimination in their use*. And, practically, every possibility of linguistic contamination is rendered vain in the Dantesque text in that the discriminatory obsession in the use of potentially "contaminating" words is such as to render them virtually fossils; and, as such, they are assimilated into the tone against which Dante never transgresses for any livelier or more sublime tonality, nearer to the chatter of earth or to the silence of heaven.

In the end, what has made Dante "great" for many years has been a terrible process of selectivity, operated on a number of words and linguistic expressions which he himself had rendered practically innumerable.

Concerning other analogous operations (that of Ariosto and that of Cervantes) we know to our schematic satisfaction the beginning of this "selectivity [predicated] on an immensely enlarged vocabulary"; it is the birth of the bourgeoisie, and therefore of humor as the corrosion of the earlier feudal institutions, and then as a screen between the subject and the object. Detachment was thus ensured, and thus the eternal cadence of the same tone on an eternally varied matter.

For Dante, while we do not know the beginning of his selective detachment, we can nonetheless deduce beyond all his various techniques the measure or the internal norm which regulates him: *it is the rigorously maintained equidistance between the author and the infinite specific aspects of his world.*

Great to the point of inhumanity as a result of winning this bet, Dante can well say at the end of his poem that he has never transgressed by a millimeter against his equidistance from his material: the only ironclad, pitiless law which dominates all the individual laws that regulate his plurilingualism.

But within a general plan which does not admit partial improvisations owed to some sentimental freedom, such an ironclad law of equidistance not only causes Dante's moral and emotional attitude *to always be the same* toward his characters and his facts, but it also ensures that Dante *is always equidistant from himself, that is, from his own feelings*—be they furious disputes, contained pieties, naive participations, and/or severe and hopelessly sweet evocations of the details of existence.

Dante has been able to obtain this by incorporating himself in his material, that is, making himself the protagonist of his poem.

The feelings, therefore, are never his, but belong to Dante the character: the invective "Ahi Pisa," for example, is not spoken in the first person by Dante the author, as it might seem; it is instead a "free indirect discourse" of Dante the character.⁹

Hence his absolute stylistic rigor, his maintaining himself absolutely equidistant from all the rest of the poem, from the creative and linguistic role of the author.

The recent fortune of Dante, founded on heteronomous and rationalistic inspiration, and on his realistic vision of society—which produces plurilingualism—reveals itself owed to a rather partial examination. In reality, all of Dante's verses (except, probably, the rare and unamalgamatable mythological verses and the verses written according to certain bizarre rules of the *ars dictandi*),* are, in the end, made of an infinitely pure material; much more "select" than those of Petrarch (whose "selection" was, we repeat, literary; due, that is, to a regression to the literary vulgate of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*,¹⁰ linguistically homologous to a precommunal feudal society, or to the nascent courtly society)—as a matter of fact, so select as to not allow comprehension if not, in the end, an infinitely exquisite understanding implying the sum of the noblest sentiments of all of us.

The opposition between Dante's plurilingualism and Petrarch's monolingualism was, at least in the "small coterie," incorrect or

* The art of speaking, or rhetoric.—Ed.

partially incorrect. If anything, it would be necessary to contrast monolingualism to monolingualism: an elevated and selective monolingualism (Petrarch) and a tonal monolingualism (Dante); a monolingualism due to the infinite iteration of his own internal attitude and his own relationship with a crystallized reality (Petrarch) and a monolingualism due to a perfectly invariable equidistance from his own internal attitude and from his own relationship with reality, no matter how varied this may be (Dante); a monolingualism as eternally homogeneous soliloquy (Petrarch) to a monolingualism which incessantly assimilates the most diverse fictions of dialogue (Dante). That is, for a certain Italian Marxist criticism, which wanted to distinguish poetry from poetry, it would be necessary to start over from scratch.

(1965)

Notes

1. See "New Linguistic Questions," n. 13, for a discussion of the verb *rivivere*.

2. See Introduction, pp. xviii–xix, for "contamination."

3. See "An Article in *Il Giorno*," n. 3, for a discussion of *Lazarionitum*.

4. In his *Pour une sociologie du roman* (Paris, 1964), p. 16ff., Goldmann sets forth the hypothesis of homology between the structure of the classical novel and the structure of exchange in a liberal economy.

5. "Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca," *Varianti e altra linguistica: una raccolta di saggi (1938–1968)* (*Variants and Other Linguistics: A Collection of Essays*: Turin, 1970), pp. 169–92.

6. "Dante oggi," *ibid.*, pp. 363–67.

7. *Purgatorio* 5: 130–136: "Pray, when you have returned to the world and have rested from your long journey,' the third spirit followed on the second, 'remember me, who am La Pia. Siena made me, Maremma unmade me, as he knows who with his ring had plighted me to him in wedlock.'"—Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton, 1973), III: 53.

8. Erich Auerbach, *Introduction to Romance Language and Literature: Latin, French, Spanish, Provençal, Italian*, trans. Guy Daniels (New York: 1961). Auerbach writes, p. 121: "He is the first poet who is purely a poet."

9. *Inferno*, 33: 79.

10. *Dolce stil nuovo*, "the sweet new style," is an expression used in *Purgatorio* 24 which has come to mean the poetry of a group of late thirteenth-century love poets whose foremost representative is Guido Cavalcanti.

Appendix

THE BAD MIMESIS*

"Dante's will to be a poet" is not born under the sign "of the abused opposition between militant criticism and academic criticism." Some of the critics whom I most admire—in fact, to tell the truth, the critics whom I most admire—have taught or teach in the universities. My article is born, if anything, under the sign of the distinction between a small group of critics, a "small coterie," and all other criticism; and such a distinction is not at all based on questions of worth or validity, but simply on the fact that where Dante is concerned I made a very "private" argument very much within the interests of that group. I declared this explicitly on several occasions in my notes.

I will now respond to the four points of Segre's criticism.

1) In an essay in *Paragone*, 184, pp. 121–144, I did in fact try to enlarge upon the strictly grammatical notion of "free indirect discourse."[†] I am sorry that in doing so I disturbed the terminological slumber of the university criticism which declares itself such. I must reiterate that free indirect discourse is much more complex and complicated than it might appear in the standard usage. I must reiterate that the free indirect can only have a sociological basis, because it is impossible to "reanimate"¹ the particular speech of a speaker if one has not identified his social class with its linguistic characteristics (Barthes says it very well: "Every man is a prisoner of his language: outside his class, the first word he speaks is a sign which places him as a whole and proclaims his whole personal history."² It is obvious that a writer, if he wants to reanimate the words of that individual, must know how to pick them with all their sociological exactitude.) Finally, I must reiterate that there are direct discourses whose sociological and linguistic precision implies a potential free indirect discourse. For example, the direct discourses of D'Annunzio do not imply any potential free indirect discourse; even if expressed first as indirect and then freed of the "that," it is always D'Annunzio who speaks. Instead, the direct discourses of

**Paragone*, n. 194 (April 1966), in response to an article by Cesare Segre. [The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

[†]See "Comments on Free Indirect Discourse," pp. 79–101.

Dante almost always imply potential free indirect discourses because their words are typical of the characters evoked.

(The expression "internal form" in my pages was clearly used in its common and literal sense, not in that "elaborated by philosophers of the language." There can be no misunderstandings about this, unless one wants to create them deliberately. Furthermore, I could only consider obvious and taken for granted—and therefore a bit approximate—the fact that the language of poetry and the language of prose are not synchronic in a given context. Finally, my use of the terms monolingualism and plurilingualism is certainly not that of a university assistant.³ They imply my whole ideology as a writer. The activity of a reader of mine, particularly if he were to read me with "philological *animus*," should be that of freeing himself from his professional habits and trying to understand what I am trying to make him understand.)

2) The first paragraphs of Professor Segre's observations in his second point should not be taken into consideration. These are inferences which respectable bourgeois have been making concerning me for some time now and to which I have never responded. As for the other paragraphs. . . .

Dante was not at all interested in the class of Vanni Fucci?⁴ And this said with the tone of one who states that Dante doesn't care about the class of anyone? Then it is really useless to argue with Professor Segre; our ideas are diametrically opposed. In any case, I will take advantage of the question raised here (on which it is useless to tell us why you care and why you mock) to return to the free indirect. Here we have that of Vanni Fucci, a nice example on which Professor Segre may, if he wants, meditate and verify certain somewhat uncomfortable ideas concerning "*oratio obliqua*."* First of all, it is not true, as Professor Segre says, that the "direct discourse" of Vanni Fucci is only a "strong but stylistically perfect and even reserved language." Dante, as always, in placing the speech of his character between quotation marks, doesn't merely attribute the grammar to him; it is always a mimesis, albeit sublime. *And it is this mimesis that is Dante's real judgment.* In fact, the direct discourse of Vanni Fucci depicts him linguistically for what he is humanly and socially, something other than a thief and a violent man. And, in fact, Dante could have placed him among the violent—and certainly he thought about it—but his justice would have only been partially real. He places him, instead—for prejudice, for rage, for spite, for scandal, for vendetta—among the thieves; this placement is due to a questionable act of justice. The figure of Vanni

* Indirect discourse.—Ed.

Fucci is not exhausted either in the sin of a violent person nor in that of a thief. His is neither the language of a violent gentleman nor that of a plebeian thief. It is the language of a gentleman whose violence made him a thief. He has declassed himself. He has abandoned his habits, which could have been those of an aristocrat, linguistically and socially (if this were not a hendiadys), in order to assume artificially the sociolinguistic habits of a criminal. This certainly is due to a trauma, unknown to us, in that troubled and indomitable Pistoian soul. A trauma which, however, we could also recognize through our contemporary diagnostic tools (Marxism and psychoanalysis), but which Dante did not recognize any the less or worse than we, and which he therefore described for what it was.

Vanni Fucci introduces himself through *his own* words—those which Dante with marvelous and absolute mimicry attributes to him—as a man who protests against the world and its institutions, a small provincial Capaneus,⁵ an old juvenile delinquent brutalized by the contamination of the outlaw world (linguistically a jargon) which he has chosen. He begins immediately by saying bitterly, “I rained.” He turns irony against himself, the irony of a gentleman, with lower-class vivacity: “I rained into Tuscany.”⁶ He recognizes his abject, declassed condition, that of the “kind of guy who *rains* into Hell”; and for the same reason he defines himself as a “mule,” which is another manifestation of the liveliness of the spoken language. When afterwards he gives his own name by placing his nickname at the end—another custom of the jargon of servants—Vanni Fucci the Beast (that it is a nickname is attested to by the Anonymous Florentine, but it is unnecessary testimony),⁷ he gives the last perfect touch to an autodefinition expressed in the jargon of the underworld because he despises polite society. The language of Vanni Fucci, in short, as Sapegno points out, reminds us of the language of Angiolieri—a cultured man who imitates the comic style of the illiterate out of anger and refinement.⁸ Vanni Fucci, however, has really lived this degeneration; he has really been damned. *And it is this which Dante, in reality, condemns.* The potential free indirect discourse, which *reveals* Dante’s real judgment on Vanni Fucci, that is, his real knowledge of that soul, beyond surfacing in the direct discourse, surfaces, even more explicit and violent, in the narration. Dante, that is, speaking to him and about him (“He gave the finger with both hands,” “Tell him not to steal away”), places himself on the same linguistic level: *he reanimates his speech.* That is, because he knows his condemned fury, and perhaps also in self-defense, he adopts that thieves’ language which Vanni Fucci had adopted to describe himself (and which was precisely the language which he used while alive—Dante probably had known him personally in 1292 and had heard him speak); the delib-

erate contamination of cultivated language with the jargon of the underworld.⁹ It is true, in fact, that it is Dante who, *reanimating the speech* of Vanni Fucci, says in his report: "He raised both hands with the finger," but it is Vanni Fucci himself who completes the expression later on: "Take this, God, I'm giving it [i.e., the finger] to you!"¹⁰ This is the proof of the pudding; in fact, the entire expression, adopted by Vanni Fucci from plebeian jargon, was "giving the finger," and half of this expression (the finger) is used by Dante as he reanimates Vanni's speech in a striking mimesis; the other half (to give) is in Vanni's direct discourse, which thus is projected by Dante within the same mimetic environment as *oratio obliqua*, in which his report is projected.

The expression "giving the finger," used as it is—for the first term outside quotation marks, for the second term within quotation marks—becomes symbolic and symptomatic; it concretely demonstrates that Dante's linguistic operation was the same inside and outside the quotation marks; that the same mimetic quantity that one finds in the narration (parsimonious and sublime, notwithstanding the comic) is also found in the direct discourses. Free indirect discourse does not appear explicitly in the *Commedia* for the simple reason that Dante the narrator is also Dante the character, and it is he, both as narrator and as character, who tells the story. The only possibility for free indirect discourse in the *Commedia* was thus that of Dante the character; and this in fact does happen, no matter how difficult this may seem to Professor Segre. "Ahi Pistoia," "Ahi Pisa" are technically free indirect discourses of Dante the character (even if, in content, they can coincide with possible, equally interjectory speeches of Dante the poet).

Dante's judgment of Vanni Fucci is not to be found in the infernal punishment which he assigns to him, nor is it in the criminal behavior which is the cause of that punishment; what Dante condemns first of all in Vanni Fucci is the degenerative process that has transformed him from a nobleman into a vile robber and thief, and the bestial sacrilegious fury that, presenting itself as an alibi for pride, has hidden the real weakness with which he has succumbed to degradation.

The language with which Vanni utters his sanguinary prophecy is the strong and stylistically formal language of culture, which is immediately avoided, distorted and almost sacrilegiously ridiculed, as in a sort of atrocious pun, by the ending: "And I said so that it may grieve you!" In short, Vanni Fucci is perfectly aware of his abjection; he not only knows how evil is in some way justified by its excesses, but he also knows that such an excess of evil can in some way justify him in the presence of Dante's dignity, and even humiliate or render that dignity a little shabby. And it is this which exasperates Dante,

who therefore doesn't know how to condemn him objectively (given that there isn't even a nominal definition of Vanni Fucci's real sin). Dante can thus condemn him only if he knows him and describes him completely, that is, if he unmasks him. The moral judgment is not an institutional action, but originally cognitive. And its concrete manifestation, in the case in point, is mimetic. This is something other than the medieval comic tradition!—other than a stylistic choice authorized by a “long and well known prehistory” (distinction, hierarchical organization, and functionalization of styles). If Dante is the author of the *Fiore* (I still have to read Contini's article concerning its attribution, and I am certain that it will convince me), it must be said that the vulgate of the *Commedia* is as far from that of the *Fiore* as from that of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*.¹¹

We could thus use for Vanni Fucci the burning words of Mauriac, who writes about a certain Figon* in the *Figaro Littéraire*: *You are not a hoodlum, you merely play the part of a hoodlum. If you were such, you would not have such an awareness of being a hoodlum.* This Figon is one of the “heroic” kidnappers and killers of Ben Barka. As the newspapers say: “He is thirty-nine years old, he is the son of a high functionary, a recipient of the Legion of Honor. Restless and rebellious as a youth, he had his first encounter with the law in 1945 when he was only nineteen. Arrested, he feigned insanity and spent three years in a hospital at Villejuif. . . . After living by his wits until 1950, to avoid being arrested he opens fire on his pursuers. . . . Released from prison in 1961, he begins to frequent the cafes and dives of Saint Germain Des Pres. He writes for several newspapers . . . he even publishes an essay in Sartre's journal. . . . In June 1962 he makes a sensational appearance on television. He is interviewed, with his face in shadows, in his role as authentic hoodlum. His cynical, bitter confession, *made in the language of convicts*, provokes scandal. . . .” Dante, then, is scandalized. And for an instant his moral nobility seems to waver; he recovers immediately, however, because—like Mauriac—he knows that Vanni Fucci is playing a part. He is re-creating a language. Which is certainly not that of Figon's urban underworld: we must remember that we are in the neighborhood of Pistoia, and every bandit must have had a Tuscan peasant mother, with her beautiful wise language; and the humorous-euphemistic peasant judgment on “bad people” must have in some way remained in the opinion he has of himself—“lively” then, rather than strictly “slangy” (“I rained into Tuscany” [*sic*], “Vanni Fucci, the Beast,” “mule,” “lair”; and only in the end, to shock the bourgeoisie, the sensational line: “Take this, God, I'm giving it to

*When I wrote this page, Figon was not yet dead. [He committed suicide in January of 1966.]

you!"). Dante thus makes himself master of Vanni Fucci's bad mimesis, and with this he masters him—and through it, as I have said, he formulates his real judgment of the sinner.

But his operation does not end here. In fact, a balance must immediately be reestablished: the discourse cannot completely depend upon that bad mimesis. It is necessary to give back to Vanni Fucci those linguistic rights which he refuses; does he or does he not belong to the cultivated and managerial class? It is here, in his belonging, by birth, to a class, that a chink appears in the armor of Vanni Fucci; unmasked, he reveals himself to belong to the same linguistic level as Dante. Then Dante gives back to him what he has taken from him. He enters into him through this chink, carrying with him an extremely strong invective, and he uses him to make it public. . . . In short, after Dante has spoken with the "real" words of Vanni Fucci in the direct discourse of his poem, in a subsequent direct discourse of the same character the latter speaks with the "real" words of Dante. At first we have an intermediate Dantesque level: "I cannot deny what you ask"—in order to arrive then at the heights of "which by turbid clouds is wrapt," which is precisely a bit difficult to attribute to both Vanni Fucci and Dante at the same time; this is unquestionably an instance of "Dantesque style": these are Dante's "real" words.

The linguistic symbiosis between Dante and his character thus has three phases, each of which subsists freely inside and outside the quotation marks, without taking them into account. The first phase is an integral, albeit synthetically sublime, mimetic adoption of the comic, that is, naturalistic language of his character; the second is the use of a middle language common to Dante and to his character (if the latter, as in the case of Vanni Fucci, belongs to Dante's social and cultural circle); the third is the attribution to the character of typically Dantesque expressions so elevated in tone that as such they are inconceivable in the mouths of speakers who, however exceptional as men, are not poets. These are all elements of *oratio obliqua* (when it is not merely naturalistic); it is precisely the exchange which takes place between the author and the character in a "free indirect discourse" as a result of which the lower mimetic limit does not stop the author from climbing when and how he wants to his highest expressive peaks when his inspiration and his eschatological programming require it.

By transforming Vanni Fucci into a "pretext" to pronounce a prophecy through his blasphemous mouth, Dante has, in short, contaminated two languages, the slangy language of Vanni and his own poetic one. Vanni's slanginess, from this perspective, is presented as an existential pedestal to a small monument of style (the prophecy), not without a certain eschatological rigidity. But as

Dante is free with respect to the mimesis of Vanni Fucci's sensational way of speaking, so he is free with respect to his own eschatology. The high poetic peaks, if not the highest peaks—high at least as linguistic canon—"which by turbid clouds is wrapt," "and with bitter and impetuous storm," escape the prophetic text, are superinscribed moments of the "Dante committed to memory"—are, precisely, dictated in the slow register. And with them Dante seems to take his revenge, once he has penetrated through the chink of which I spoke into the soul of Vanni Fucci: "Ah, you count on scandalizing me, you want me to look like a serious, moralistic bourgeois citizen, a person who is on the side of the institutions, of the respectable citizen who takes offence at Fignon's dirty words on television. Well, first of all, I want it to be completely clear that I know your game—you are playing a part. And now listen to my words, in tune with the highest literary register, with dactylic combinations and alliterations. If you are crazy on the low side, I am crazy on the high side. If I was so petty as to revenge myself on you by placing you among the criminals against wealth instead of among the violent against God (but in cursing God you don't want to offend God but those who, for better or worse, believe in him; you are transforming God into a social institution, a little Pistoian taboo, the pretext of a group of privileged brawlers), you must admit that, at the same time, I made you greater; I pulled you out of your rural dens, I remade you in pure Romanesque, I admitted you into the myth of Antiquity, I gave your small dimensions the real vastness of the small dimensions of the classics of the Apennines or the Greeks."

Notes

1. See "New Linguistic Questions," n. 13, for a discussion of the verb *rivivere*.

2. Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* [1953], trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (Boston, 1970), p. 81.

3. In the Italian university system an assistant to a professor, someone who has completed the degree but not yet received a formal appointment. Such a person, on the lowest rung of the academic ladder, might not be expected to proffer individualistic definitions of standard terms—unlike Pasolini.

4. *Inferno* 24: 97-149; 25: 1-3.

5. Capaneus (*Inferno* 14: 43-69), one of the seven captains who made war on the Greek city of Thebes. His blasphemy of Zeus was instantly answered by a lightning bolt that killed him. Dante writes of Vanni Fucci that "through all the dark circles of Hell I saw no spirit so proud against God, not him who fell from the walls at Thebes" (25: 13-15).—Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton, 1973), I: 259.

6. Dante wrote, "I rained *from* Tuscany into hell" [emphasis added]. The Italian has the suggestion of arriving suddenly.

7. Pasolini is using a standard edition of *The Divine Comedy* edited by Natalino Sapegno. Sapegno's note to 24: 126 quotes a chronicler, the "Anonymous Florentine," who writes that "because he was beastlike, he was called 'Vanni the beast.'"

8. Sapegno's note to 1.126 continues: "The whole presentation of self that the damned one makes . . . seems to reproduce . . . the look of extravagant cynicism of certain bourgeois poets of the period, especially Angiolieri."

9. See Introduction, pp. xviii-xiv, for a discussion of "contamination."

10. The Italian is usually euphemistically mistranslated since it refers to an obscene gesture in which the hand is closed into a fist and the thumb raised between the first and second fingers.

11. See "Dante's Will to Be a Poet," n. 10, for *dolce stil nuovo*.

THE END OF THE AVANT-GARDE
(Notes on a Sentence by Goldmann, Two Verses of an
Avant-Garde Text, and an Interview with Barthes)

I

*"It would be interesting to follow the meanderings of the secondary novel forms that might be based, quite naturally, on the collective consciousness. One would end up perhaps—I have not yet made such a study—with a very varied spectrum, from the lowest forms of the Delly type to the highest forms to be found perhaps in such writers as Alexandre Dumas or Eugène Sue. It is also perhaps on this plane that we should situate, parallel with the nouveau roman, certain best-sellers that are bound up with the new forms of collective consciousness."*¹

This sentence—which is something of a plan for future work—with which Goldmann concludes his essay on the "Sociology of the Novel," lends itself to many reflections.

First of all, to a critical reflection on Goldmann himself: Goldmann, in fact, seems not to know or not to want to know that what distinguishes the second-class novels mentioned here from the first-class novels analyzed in the preceding pages is literary value, that is, a different linguistic quality.* In content, in plot—in the practical structure—they are identical; Dumas and Stendhal are the same thing: nothing distinguishes the hero of the two novels in his "homological" correspondence with the economic hero of the capitalism of free enterprise (precisely in accordance with Goldmann's definitions).²

Is there then a more subtle and complex aspect (that of the writing or of the style) which must be isolated in the phenomenon of homology? It is fairly simple, as Goldmann seems to conceive of it; the social climbing of the hero of industrialization certainly resembles the impetus of affirmation of the cohesive character of the nineteenth-century novel, etc., etc. But in such a case, doesn't one identify the structure of the novel a bit naively with the socio-psychological content of its plot, with its development, etc., etc.—ignoring the language completely, that is, the stylistic aspect on which, instead, the hierarchies of worth of the novel are predicated?

*Granted that to understand the overall value of a novel it is not necessary to read all of it; the reading of one page or even a few lines can suffice.

In short, it seems to me that an argument on homology similar to Goldmann's could also be made concerning *translated* novels. In fact, I also understand what Goldmann says concerning Russian or German texts (written, that is, in languages that I do not know); that is, for example, concerning the adventures of the characters of Dostoevsky and Kafka.

I do not deny that all of this is fairly legitimate. The novel, in fact, possesses some nonlinguistic "internal forms"—for example, the psychology of the characters, their "characters" as they appear even when the book is closed—which can remain perfectly intact even in a commonplace translation.

But what about the quality of the page, that which precisely determines the hierarchy of values and places the novels of Delly or Sue in a lower category than those of Dostoevsky or Kafka?

A different cultural formation comes into play at this point in my possible criticism of Goldmann, a different way of conceiving of the reading of a text (which I, moreover, place into discussion here).

What I am accustomed to feeling immediately in a text is not, on the whole, the novelistic adventure of a hero, but the quality of the page which narrates it. It does not seem to me that the real structure of a novel is to be found in its semantic field (I have adopted this expression as a vague analogy), but in its linguistic field. For me, if there is a homology between the social structure and the novelistic structure, this homology must be searched for by comparing the social structure with the linguistic structure of the novel or, in the case in point, with its stylistic structure (so far I have always used the word system). Or at least so it seems to me. But, to be very candid, I am no longer entirely sure of it.

A second observation which can be made concerning this sentence by Goldmann is certainly a bit extravagant with respect to the text.

Could the "best sellers" of which Goldmann speaks be some of the recent big westerns or spy films? That is: is Goldmann's contention also valid for the cinema? And what I have defined as the "language of the cinema of poetry," couldn't it also be a parallel chapter to the "novel without novel" of which Goldmann speaks, as "a novelistic structure homologous to monopoly capitalism"? (It is very probable: and in more general terms, I myself, in concluding my essay on the "Cinema of Poetry,"* expanded the strictly technical analysis in this sense.)

In cinema, the hierarchy of values between first- and second-class narrative products is even more sharp and clamorous: the petite

* See pp. 167–86.

bourgeoisies of the industrialized countries—by now on the road of technological civilization—have abandoned or are abandoning their interest in the “expressive qualities” of “troublesome individuals.” It seems that they no longer need such an alibi in the presence of their “collective consciousness.”

And their choice is thus the natural one: that is, they choose the second-class film, without expressiveness and without problematics.

But why has the cinema taken so long to reach this phenomenon? Why do the petit-bourgeois masses of the industrial world now choose today the second-class film analogous to the second-class novel of thirty or forty or one hundred years ago? Could this delay be an absolutely normal synchrony with paperback novels? But aren't paperbacks, like the popular films mentioned above, narrative structures homologous to the capitalism of thirty, forty, or one hundred years ago? Why so many diligent and generous consumers *now*? Do such consumers—typical representatives of neocapitalism—feel nostalgia for the capitalism of the boss of the ironworks?³ Is it the usual cultural delay of the masses who, as students of folklore would say, await the “descent” of products developed and worn out by the chronologically more advanced elites?

I can only answer all these questions poorly. But it is not to answer them directly that I have begun this second observation on Goldmann's sentence, but rather to underline one fact: that while the narrative structures of paperbacks are explicitly presented as an editorial revival,* or as a late-arriving phenomenon of mass consumption of cultural products—one doesn't have the same impression for the films analogous to those novels.

I mean that the hypothetical and potential language of the cinema—if it exists, and if it doesn't, if it isn't definable, the whole of the “languages of art” of the various films—is an international and interclassist language, given its nature (even if it is not yet defined morphologically).[†]

Now it is true that every film contains the spoken language of the characters which makes up its specific, national instance; nevertheless, this language is in some way diachronic with the typical language of cinema, through which an im-sign is formed by the physical audiovisual presence of the character—by his action, by

*Pasolini uses the English word “revival” here.—Ed.

†It should be understood that I am speaking of the most exquisitely cinematographic aspect of film, that is, of the “audiovisual reproduction of reality” (in grammatical terms: the unit of first articulation of the cinematographic language is the im-sign, the unit of second articulation is the kineme; that is, a shot with all the objects which comprise it). [See Pasolini's discussion of these terms in “The Cinema of Poetry,” pp. 167–86.]

himself—with the integration of his language (which thus becomes only one particular element).

Okay: a language founded on the audiovisual reproduction of reality, that is, on reality as such, cannot possess structures which are strictly homologous with those of the historically recognizable society where the film is produced. The audiovisual reproduction of reality is an identical linguistic system or language in Italy or in France, in Ghana or in the United States. The possible and not yet defined narrative structures of this language of cinema which “expresses reality with reality” would therefore not seem to suit the laws of homology—which are essentially national inasmuch as they are typical of nations dominated by capitalist bourgeoisies—so acutely described by Goldmann. If there is a homological characteristic in the structures of cinema in relation to those of society, this society thus takes form, in an amorphous and general way, as the whole of civilized humanity—including the “developing” countries.

The structures of the language of cinema therefore present themselves as transnational and transclassist rather than as international or interclassist. They prefigure a possible sociolinguistic situation of a world made tendentially unitary by complete industrialization and by the consequent leveling which implies the disappearance of particular and national traditions.

(The proliferation of highly technologized spies and cowboys would thus be only superficially new filmic editions of the heroes of second-rate bourgeois literature—the novelistic hero homologous to the economic hero of the capitalism of free enterprise and paleoimperialism. They would represent instead a subtle instance of technological interclassism inasmuch as they would, perhaps, be the heroes of the “leisure time” of societies composed, at the lowest level, of specialized workers; the common dream, in any case, of the manager and of the worker, of the technocrat and of the technician.)

The third observation on Goldmann’s sentence—and it is the observation that matters most here—is presented in strictly Italian terms; it is part of our daily nightmare.

What is it that, in Italy, has released the masses of consumers of films, bringing them back to the movie houses? And what has caused the decline of a certain interest which seemed to have been awakened in recent years in films endowed with expressive qualities and problematics? And what is it, at the same time, that causes Mr. Valeri Manera to feel in the right when he speaks of a “return to order” in Italian narrative?

I believe I can answer these questions with scandalous simplicity: in Italy the cause of all of this is the fact that, to express myself with

1 'problematic' / 'committed'

a mundane euphemism, Marxism has gone out of style; and with this I want to say that Marxist culture in its real aspect has turned against itself—to criticize itself, to reflect on itself, to rethink itself—while in its official aspect it pretends that nothing has happened. It rallies around the flag of its old labor war cry, it employs words and forms of a four-day *ars dictandi*;* and therefore it draws a blank, with some small electoral failure. In the Italy of the Resistance and of commitment, that is, in the vital moment of Marxism, even notwithstanding Communist tactics and officialdom, a vast operation of cultural diffusion was carried out: culture was “in style.” And even the most reactionary and ignorant bourgeoisies, as the result of some sort of snobbery, were drawn into the game. They were, that is, consumers of films and books which the PCI [Italian Communist Party] and left-wing culture considered committed, because commitment was at the center of the cultural and fashionable debate. At this moment, then, Marxist parties and organizations no longer have the strength to impose the fashion of certain cultural products; they would be deprived of authority and plaintive would sound their recommendation.⁴

With a brutal about-face the high bourgeoisie and the petit-bourgeois masses in a “new collective consciousness” make choices which at any rate become popular as symptoms of a pragmatic and indisputable change.

The problematical individual, who was the alibi behind whose acceptance the bourgeoisie had been able to hide its bad faith, had had the right to citizenship in Italy for a certain period by presenting himself as “committed.” And it was precisely the bourgeoisie that wanted him and accepted him thus: alibi upon alibi, the alibi of commitment upon the alibi of problematics.

The commitment, therefore, in the period of bourgeois reconstruction, was only the external manifestation of the problematics, and as such it was already prefigured in the bourgeois consciousness. In any case, a certain vitalism, a certain hopeful factionalism (analogous to that of the Left), was necessary to the world of De Gasperi in its painful movement forward. Today commitment is a by now useless alibi for the conscience of the Italian bourgeoisie, which has surpassed misery and has gone beyond the first goal of industrialization: and the fall of commitment, as decoy-concept, has carried with itself in its fall the problematics as such: confrontation, the protester, the abnormal person, the Different, etc. (with some case of racism, however slight). The new “collective consciousness” in Italy excludes these problems. Its ideology, it is well known, is the “decline of ideology.” Marxism, in crisis, does not have the authority to

*A slap-dash or thrown-together rhetoric.—Ed.

render valid the arguments which correctly oppose this decline—its old pretextuality, the indifferent hooliganism of its appeal to technique, etc., etc. And in this confrontation not even the groups of rigid "Piacenza-style" Marxists⁵ carry any weight—rare groups who operate in the provinces, in a Northern Italy which thinks about other things and elsewhere.

I repeat: the downfall of the concept of commitment, as decoy-notion, has carried with it, in its fall, the problematics as such: confrontation, the protester, the abnormal person, the Different, etc.

But what has been the effect of this odious need of the bourgeoisie for stability and leveling, of this obscene health of neocapitalism? The most incredible and the most natural. A widespread, violent, scandalous, and popular resurgence, so much so as to come into style, of problematics in and of itself, of confrontation, of the protester, of the abnormal person, of the Different, etc.! They have reached—in their fury to defend themselves and in their despair—a sort of aggressive exhibitionism, cutting themselves off from and distinguishing themselves from the rational protest of Marxism, or even ignoring it, as happens particularly in America.

In the presence of this nonviolent anarchical revival* every other form of confrontation with society—and in the case in point with its literary elites—only seems *literary*. In comparison with Ginsberg, for example, all the linguistic protesters seem like little friars⁶—as a journalist, an imitator of Contini, calls graceful soccer players who play by the book. All the Italian avant-garde, for example (with the exception of certain vulgar and almost physically repugnant social climbers), is composed of such little friars. If I had to define them I would say that they are men who repeat and want to repeat, with almost feminine and provocative punctiliousness, their fathers' characteristics. . . .

But they tranquilly admit this (with other words, obviously!). Because they began it all with a dramatic gesture, that is, with the declaration of their dissociation of the linguistic enterprise from the process of being. The linguistic enterprise consisted of a pure and simple linguistic battle against the bourgeoisie; the process of being consisted of a behavior naturally and typically bourgeois. Avant-garde writers, in short, accepted the bourgeoisie as it is, in the same manner, for example, that a *missino*⁷—as a result of an exhibitionism which consists of the scandalous choice of conformity—accepts Authority. Declared with impudence and with aggressive awareness, such a dissociation was at first presented as part of a whole of strictly unitary ideas, which are the ideas of a poetics, and it has left everyone dumbfounded. But two or three years have

*Pasolini uses the English word "revival" here.—Ed.

passed and a few texts have accumulated on the table. What do these texts attest to? That what the avant-garde writers had proclaimed and insisted upon in their relations with editors and with public life in general is not merely a part or an element of those texts, *but is instead their only real content.*

Let us consider a passage from a text in one of the many little terrorist periodicals. Here it is:

Not to mention a pile of places echappés bescheissen
 contra diabulum auf dem Schlafhause bescheissen
 with him in the ink dormitory semper diaboli duo . . .

The origin of these long verses is probably to be found in the little verses of Rimbaud, taken up repeatedly during the course of avant-garde revivals* (I would recall Ardengo Soffici, if nothing else, and futurism in general).⁸ It should be understood that this does not interest me as a precedent (suitable to comfortably devalue the avant-garde as repetition, etc., because that isn't true). Rather, I am interested in identifying a prosodic category.

From the beginning these long verses or lines of brief verses had an antiliterary function—when literature is understood as a syntactical and lexical product—a technique which, as Barthes says, all things considered, simply points to words as the center of the universe (therefore more to their "sense" than to their "meaning"): be it [the value of single words] nominal or verbal, in the language of literature understood classically—from Homer to Rimbaud only partially included—syntagmas tended to emphasize the value of single words. And it was a whole of pregnant, concrete, sensuous, and ideological words which founded the various techniques or "writings."

Instead of focusing the climaxes of the discourse on one or two single key words—making of the sentence or the verse a small context illuminated so as to foreground two or three privileged terms—these long verses (let's call them such, they don't have any other definition) tend to place the climax outside the words, studying the "cursus"[†] well so that no climax falls on any word.

The social protest becomes antiliterary protest, and this therefore becomes antiverbal protest. The "cursus" of the long verse is therefore a *tangential*, fundamentally dactylic "cursus" (because there is no doubt that it is an idea of dactylic extraction, perhaps not entirely casually, to dominate its origins). So that every single word is placed as if on an inclined curve, and its charge, in such a position, tends to turn upside down and escape tangentially.

The whole of the "cursus," which, from tangent to tangent (its

*Pasolini uses the English word "revivals" here.—Ed.

†Pattern of accents.—Ed.

dactylic rhythm is without stresses) operates centrifugally on the metaphorical meanings of the word, causing it to lose weight until it is almost empty, thus forms a convex curve, a sort of closure from outside the sentence or the magmatic *lassa*⁹ (of a somewhat biblical sort), lightened of all its senses and its meanings, of all its concreteness, of all its literariness, and of all its life.

Now, every destruction is essentially a self-destruction, and in the dactylic or tangential "cursus" of the long verse or the brief verses such an obvious truth is manifested with a laboratory-like clarity. By destroying the social (literary) values of the language, destroying the significative and metaphoric force of the word, finally destroying his own writing or his own temptation to write—the poet destroys himself (but might it not be a litotes?), and also becomes insignificant as an actor of a simple and absolute protest (if what is of interest in a protest are the reasons and therefore also the psychology). I know, we could also argue about this (we'll see later), but what I am interested in deducing from these observations is something else. To wit.

In these long verses, the equality of value which is instituted for all types of words—the "verbal democracy-ness," so to say, which removes the expressive peaks and flattens the graph of the linguistic oscillations to a flat and regular form; the graying which follows, and therefore the predominance of litotes—as preservation of each word from its individual expressive charge, as continual refusal to be there, and instead to vanish tangentially into thin air; the flattening operated by the ellipsis and by the hermeneutic specialization of the terms (there is no expressiveness in German for those who don't understand German; and for those who do know it, the curse words written in German lose all scatological violence—somewhat like saying plant instead of foot). All this, in conclusion, causes us to find ourselves in the presence of rhythmical "successions" of flattened words, all aligned on the same plane—isocephalic, isophonic, frontal.

There is a tendency, in short, to exclude the metaphorical nature of language in favor of its metonymic nature, but the metonymic figures of syntagmatic type which are born of it embrace passages of the "sense" of reality in the same way in which insignificant chalk volutes embrace them. They are, in fact, metonymical figures born simply of the deliberate loss of their metaphorical nature, so that they present themselves in the end without shadows, without ambiguity, and without drama—like impersonal formularies or academic texts.

Read all of Sanguinetti's poems, and you will see how exact this description is; and the same is true of Balestrini's "actions" and, in short, the texts of the less abjectly neo-avant-gardist. Even though

the pages of Sanguineti, Balestrini, and the others are tormented by parentheses, grammatical cuts, typographical chasms, interruptions, inversions and iterations of every kind, citations from other texts, the most antiliterary possible (but for the most part from newspapers—slogans, banalities from the daily news, etc., etc.), even though every effort is expended to make us forget literature understood as the word, the page never collapses, never wrinkles, never opens into internal surfaces, does not rise into reliefs, never presents—I don't say a shadow—not even a faint shadow, nor a chiaroscuro, and therefore never has an ambiguity (unless it is enunciated), an uncertainty, an excess, a pause, a mistake.

All there is is on a single plane, deprived of *luminismo* and invested with the white aseptic light of typographic universality.¹⁰

As can be seen, this description which I have made of an avant-garde text corresponds perfectly to every possible description of a classicist text.*

In fact, having finished reading an avant-garde text, what have I learned? What information have I obtained from that way of writing?

First of all, I have come to know—rather clearly, and perhaps also with pleasure and with a sense of brotherhood—that a linguistic struggle is taking place in that text and through it. And naturally, in this, there is nothing pertaining to classicism (except given the case, of course, that the will for such a struggle is sincere). In any case, I also learn, rather clearly and with pleasure, that this linguistic battle is unfolding (a) against the daily manifestations of the petit-bour-

*Where does this "classicism" come from and how can it be explained, for it is certainly the most absurd thing which can be predicated of an avant-garde piece of writing?

There are probably many reasons: those of literary history, which tend to backdate the Italian avant-garde to the beginning of the twentieth century, interest me very little; there, in fact, the classicism was explicable since the avant-garde reaction was purely verbal and could not hide, to a critical eye, its real cultural and mental structure. It was nominally presented as anticlassicist, assuming science as its poetics against the (traditional and academic) humanities. But science at the beginning of the century was still, in non-Marxist men of letters, a humanistic science.

The real new scientific spirit did not express itself through the avant-garde movements but through much deeper revolutions (the secularizations of materialism and of psychoanalysis) and through communist revolutions.

Not for nothing was *the machine*, not science, already the real protagonist of the paleo-avant-garde movements. And through the exaltation of the machine science was mythicized, and thus became humanistic once again in the traditionalist and classicist sense of the word.

The neo-avant-garde repeats this phenomenon. It is technique [in the sense of technology] (along with sociology perhaps), not science, which is the real protagonist of neo-avant-garde poetics. And it is through the positive-negative exaltation of technique that science is mythicized. Furthermore, the great rebirth of the humanistic sciences, in Europe and in America, becomes a sort of purely nominal tralala tralala, and words such as structuralism or Jakobson become aesthetic allusions.

geois language, which is stupidly habitual and unpoetic, (b) against the manifestations of a traditional literature, which could be described as the equivalent of this language in a high-level jargon.

Everything, however, seems to reduce itself straight away to these two naked, schematic pieces of information. Almost as if the idea of this struggle was obsessive and therefore could only infinitely repeat itself, uttering mechanical variants of always identical formulas.

I know this about the purposes of that text.

But what do I know about the author of that text? Ah, here, absolutely nothing. Or better, I know only one thing: I know, that is, that he is a man of letters. A man of letters inasmuch as he is *not* a magician who utters an exorcism, *nor* a priest who says mass, *nor* a speaker who offers slogans, *nor* a notary who reads reports. But, as I do not come to know anything about the magician, the priest, the speaker, or the notary from exorcisms, from the mass, from slogans, and from reports—only that he is a magician, a priest, a speaker, a notary—so from an avant-garde text I do not come to know anything about the man of letters who composed it, only that he is a man of letters. And it is thus that the ancient, incurable classicism of Italian literature perpetuates itself.

When literature is *only literature*, it becomes a social fact. I can therefore identify men of letters who present themselves *only as men of letters* with what they are socially.

So that once I have identified the avant-garde men of letters as being *only men of letters*—that is, once I have classified them socially for what they are (and what they want to be) in life—then I can judge and criticize in them what I have always found repugnant to do, out of respect for the grace which life must have. Not call private existence into play in ideological matters, not mix character into literary disputes, etc. In short, not become moralistic.

Instead, now I know that if I wanted to do it, I could do it, because having unmasked the trick of dissociation—precisely and only through the by now complete reading of the texts—once the effect of the initial dramatic gesture has cooled off—the avant-garde men of letters, no longer dissociated, reveal themselves as the only thing they are and want to be: that is, old petit bourgeois, united in a group according to horrible tradition (freemasonry, the mafia, academic life, cafe-intellectualism, congressional sessions, esprit de corps).

Still, out of the respect that life ought to receive, I will, however, limit my practical and therefore existential criticisms—as literary diatribe—to two points.

1. Terror, taboo, the obsession of the avant-garde with naturalism as false target naively reveals terror, taboo, obsession with reality. The literary technique that in a rough interpretation seems to best reproduce reality by evocation—naturalism—is what most

scares avant-garde writers and excites their defense mechanisms, composed of contempt and—albeit fatuous—terrorism.

2. The—in a certain way necessary—action undertaken by the avant-garde in the rethinking and subversion of literary values which were in the process of being codified has naturally yielded counterproductive results (about which, for the rest, I care nothing at all; I am simply making an observation); that is, the paper bomb exploded by the avant-gardist under the codified little fort of literary values has caused a rather large group of second-class men of letters to swarm through the breach (Berto, Bevilacqua, the good Prisco, etc.), so that Italian literature has been demoted to the minor leagues. But that's well and good because this is the truth, and therefore we must be grateful to the avant-garde for having restored it in its own way.

II

Is there a point of connection among three very asymmetrical observations on the passage by Goldmann? Yes, there is.

1. The homology, I have said, is not conceivable for me as strictly a function of content. It is necessary, I have said, to analyze the linguistic structure of a work and to integrate the analysis of the structure of the plot, as effected by Goldmann. Here I believe there can be a frank point of agreement and understanding between myself and the avant-garde movements. And it is on this frank point that there has been, I repeat, a moment of necessity of the avant-garde movements (at the beginning of the still not reconsidered and not accepted Marxist crisis, and of the new "collective consciousness" of the neocapitalist bourgeoisies).

2. I have said that the case of cinema constitutes an exception to the laws of homology as they are proposed by Goldmann, because the transnational and transclassist specificity of the language of cinema does not permit a direct linguistic homology between cinema and national societies. It is not at all the case, therefore, of taking Goldmann's words as gospel: to resign oneself to be fatally "homologous with petit-bourgeois society in one's work" and to make an alibi of this in order to be legitimately what one is with guilt, that is, for all practical purposes, petit bourgeois. There is only one way to redeem oneself from that condition: to hate it. On this the avant-gardists turn a deaf ear, and it is for this that their ephemeral function is exhausting itself, and their end in practical terms can be mentioned and therefore is at hand.

On the second of these two points, I believe that I have expressed myself clearly enough in the pages of these notes.

Instead, I would like to pause on the first point.

Is it really true, after all, that the real structure of all work is its linguistic structure (in the stylistic sense)? This is one of the cornerstones of my way of seeing reality and of reading books, which I never subjected to debate (hence, precisely, some elective affinities with the avant-garde, to which I alluded earlier). Now it is instead precisely this that I am placing into discussion, but naturally with the greatest uncertainty (therefore I write about it defending myself, with a sort of meandering and subterranean humoristic vein—the sign of a prudence which is certainly not typical of me . . .).

What intrigues me—and intrigues me because I am mature about it—is that the two most advanced and most extraordinary representatives of European essay writing that I know, Goldmann and Barthes, are both what we in Italy would call “*contenutisti*,” that is, they focus on the content of a work. Except when they are focusing specifically on this they are completely deaf to the phonetic preciousness and to the semantic expansions of language, language as such—almost as if idealism and stylistic criticism had never existed.

But I had arrived, in any case, at this emphasis on . . . “content” . . . as usual . . . by means of tortuous, poorly definable roads which include biographical vicissitudes and immoderate passions, which always lead me to do something before it is understood.

In brief, the perception that it was no longer possible to write using the technique of the novel transformed itself through a sort of unconscious self-therapy into the desire to use another technique, that is, that of cinema. The important thing was to avoid doing nothing or acting negatively. Between my renunciation of the novel and my decision to make films, there was no break in continuity. I accepted it as a change in technique.

But was it true? Wasn't it instead the abandonment of one language for another? The abandonment of the damned Italy for an at least transnational Italy . . . ? The old rabid desire to renounce my Italian citizenship? (To adopt some other, afterwards?)

But in the end it wasn't even this; no, it wasn't even the adoption of another language. . . .

In making films I was finally living according to my philosophy. That's all.

Forgive me if, in order to explain myself, I tell here the plot of the first brief little introductory episode of a mixed, episodic film which is among my projects.

There is Totò, his hair made of many colored pencils, like the Lampostyl character, holding forth from the teacher's lectern.¹¹ And Ninetto [Davoli], with the red *fiocco* of the diligent and uncaring student, who listens to him, learning the lesson like a monkey.¹²

But why is Totò draped on the lectern in such an affected manner? And why is he so content, speaking so blissfully, almost yawning because of his inner satisfaction?

*cinema reproduces reality
reality is a language*

Well, he is explaining what cinema is, and it is just what cinema is that makes him be so in harmony with life and so happy to share it with others. So much so that he finishes his explanations singing short stanzas, and Ninetto keeps a close watch while singing the refrain.

Cinema is a language, Totò sings, a language which compels the enlargement of the concept of language. It is not a symbolic, arbitrary, and conventional system. It does not possess an artificial keyboard on which to play the signs like so many Pavlovian bells, signs which evoke reality as the bell evokes cheese for the mouse and makes him salivate.

Cinema does not evoke reality, as literary language does; it does not copy reality, as painting does; it does not mime reality, as drama does. Cinema reproduces reality, image and sound! By reproducing reality, what does cinema do? Cinema expresses reality with reality. If I want to represent Sanguineti, I do not resort to magical evocations (poetry), but I use Sanguineti himself. Or if Sanguineti is unwilling, I choose a long-nosed seminary student, or an umbrella salesman in his Sunday best; in other words, I choose another Sanguineti.¹³ In any case, I do not go outside the circle of reality. I express reality—and therefore I detach myself from it—but I express it with reality itself.

And so, completely happy, Totò and Ninetto go out of the school and go off to implement the theory in the streets, in the squares, among the people. And this is cinema! It is nothing more than being there, in reality! You represent yourself to me and I represent myself to you!

In any moment reality is "cinema in its natural state"; it only lacks a camera to reproduce it, that is, to write it through the reproduction of what it is.

Cinema is therefore virtually an endless "sequence shot," endless as the reality which can be reproduced by an invisible camera.

There is not one single moment in which Sanguineti is not cinema; (so long as he lives) he is always there and a camera can therefore virtually always be there to reproduce him in a "sequence shot" which is as infinite and uninterrupted as his presence. . . .

Now, what is presence? It is . . . it is something which speaks for itself. . . . It is a language. Reality is a language. Something other than making the "semiology of cinema." It is the semiology of reality that must be made!

Cinema is the written language of this reality as language.

The presence of Sanguineti* is a reality which speaks to me; it

*I insist on mentioning the name of Sanguineti because he is the only one who knows in his heart that the adventure is about to end (and he knows because in any case he will be able to continue). There will be a few more conferences in which some

gives me information about itself. The physiognomy, first of all, tells me that he is a middle-aged man, still rather adolescent in appearance, who can't really be called handsome, who, in short, has certain distinguishing features. In addition to the language of physiognomy there is the language of behavior, and the behavior informs me with its language that the individual who behaves thus belongs to a given social class which is part of a given culture, etc., etc. Together with the language of physiognomy and of behavior there is the language of language, that is, of the written-spoken Italian of Sanguineti, which gives me further information on his given way of being, etc., etc.

If a camera were to reproduce him, it would reproduce (or write) all the aspects of the speaking reality of Sanguineti.

Now, all these languages (the one of physical presence, the one of behavior, and the one of written-spoken language—which would be the three fundamental chapters of a volume on the "SEMIOLGY OF REALITY") are summarized then in a last and major language, which is the language of action.

Caught by a pragmatic fury, Totò yells, "it is action which transforms reality into a story!"

If Sanguineti had lived in the neolithic age, and a camera had reproduced him audiovisually—his prognathous jaws, his abominable behavior, and his feral (but extremely communicative) howls would in any case have given us information concerning him; that is, he would have expressed himself, but his greatest expression would have been that due to his action as a maker of polished weapons, with which he would have contributed to the modification of reality and made history of it.

If instead he had been the head of the Russian Revolution of 1917, he would have expressed himself through a great poem of action on the transformation of the structures of a feudal society, etc., etc.

In the final analysis the series of data which a man produces as such, as reality that represents itself and acts, is called an *example*, and this is the difference between the language of natural reality and the language of human reality. The first only produces data; the second, along with the data, also produces an example.¹⁴

Audiovisual techniques capture man in the act in which he gives the example (willing or not).

It is for this reason that television is so immoral. Because, not

young and petulant idiots will speak about the antinovel as if they were speaking about Parma prosciutto. Then the end, and those who have some quality, even as little friars, will be able to continue, while a well deserved silence will fall on the others, as on the yellowed packs of photographs of hermetic poets in cafes, or of black shirts [Fascists]. Exactly in that manner.

reality as representation of itself
— cinema in nature

being founded primarily on editing, it is limited to being an audiovisual technique in the pure state; it is, therefore, very near to that uninterrupted "sequence shot" which cinema virtually is.

The "sequence shots" of television show mankind naturalistically; that is, they make their reality speak for what it is. But because the only nonnaturalistic intervention of television is the censor's cut, made in the name of the *petite bourgeoisie*, video is a perpetual source of *representations of petit-bourgeois life and ideology*. That is, of "good examples." It is for this reason that television is at least as repulsive as concentration camps.

But let us return to Totò's happy speech, which is about to end.

If one can say that reality—as representation of itself, that is, as language—is "cinema in nature," one can also say that cinema, in reproducing it, that is, in becoming its "written" language, stands as witness for what it is, underlines its phenomenology.*

Cinema thus furnishes us with "a semiology of reality in nature."

Why have I made this extravagant speech? Because cinema was necessary for me to understand an enormously simple thing which, however, no man of letters knows. That reality expresses itself with itself, and that literature is nothing more than a means of allowing reality to express itself with itself when it isn't physically present. That is, poetry is only an evocation, and what counts is the reality evoked, which alone speaks to the reader, as it spoke alone to the author.†

These are the strange traits of my emphasis on content. . . .

Thus I read with great pleasure an interview which Barthes gave to some young people** and which I have here before me, typed and unedited.¹⁶

Barthes writes, taking as his point of departure a few "linguistic" questions on cinema, that probably cinematographic expression also belongs to the order of the great signifying units, which correspond

*Would whoever can do it tell me if this reasoning can be considered, perhaps through Sartrean existentialism, within the context of phenomenological research. If, that is, reality can also be considered in "flesh and blood" as the I of such research. And if by chance the "phenomena" can be the large "syntagmatic" forms with which the language of reality expresses itself in concrete terms (or "The Prose of the World," to paraphrase the title of a new book by Foucault which I have not yet read).¹⁵

†From this the banality that "every real writer is by definition realistic" acquires value. However, there are writers (Tolstoy, for example) who have great and synthetic forms of reality to express and therefore the means of their evocation are great and synthetic (syntagmatic). While there are other writers (Pound, for example) who have particular and obscure forms of reality to express (or of their feeling of reality, which is part of reality), and therefore they have to have recourse to (violently formal) evocations stylistically particular and obscure.

**The editors of the journal *Cinema and Film*, whose first issue is about to be published in the near future.

Brecht
JAKOBSON - metaphor/metonymy

contagion
montage

to global, diffuse, latent signifieds which do not belong to the same category of the isolated and discontinuous signifieds of articulated language. But this opposition between microsemantics and macrosemantics could perhaps constitute another way of considering cinema as language, abandoning the plane of *denotation* . . . to pass to the plane of *connotation*, that is, to that of the global, diffuse, and in some way second signifieds. But it would be opportune at this point to follow the (no longer literally linguistic) rhetorical models isolated by Jakobson, extended by him in a general manner to articulated language, and which he himself applied, in passing, to cinema: that is, metaphor and metonymy.¹⁷ Metaphor, Barthes explains, is the prototype of all the signs that can be substituted, one for the other, by similitude. Metonymy is the prototype of all the signs whose signifieds are superimposed because they are in contiguity, one could almost say in contagion. For example, a calendar whose pages are detached in a metaphor. One is tempted to say that in cinema every montage, that is, every meaningful contiguity, is a metonymy, and since cinema is montage, that cinema is a metonymic art. . . .

The dominant sign of every metonymic and therefore syntagmatic art is the will of the author to express a "meaning" rather than signifieds. Therefore, *to always have something happen* in his work. Therefore, to always evoke reality directly, that reality which is the seat of the meaning which transcends the signifieds.

" . . . Certainly, the work always has a meaning, but it is precisely the science of meaning which currently enjoys an extraordinary expansion (as a result of a sort of fecund snobbery), to teach us paradoxically that meaning, so to speak, is not contained in the signified. The relationship between signifier and signified (that is, the sign) at first seems to be the foundation itself of every 'semi-logical' reflection, but later one comes to have a much vaster vision of the 'meaning'. . . ." ¹⁸

Further:

" . . . 'Meaning' is such a fatality for man that art, as freedom, seems to endeavor, today in particular, not to *generate* meaning, but on the contrary, to *suspend it*; not to construct meanings, but to not fill them *exactly*." ¹⁹

"To suspend the meaning": here is a stupendous epigraph for what could be a new description of the commitment, of the mandate of the writer. And in fact at this point Barthes immediately thinks of Brecht.

"In relation to this problem of meaning, the case of Brecht is very complicated. On the one hand, as I said, he has had an acute awareness of the techniques of meaning (his position in relation to Marxism was extremely original, but not very sensitive to the re-

Cinema as metonymy

sponsibilities of form). He knew the total responsibility of the most humble signifiers, such as the color of a costume or the placement of a projector. . . . Finally, we have seen with what attention to detail he worked and wanted others to work on the semantic responsibility of the syntagmas (epic art, preached by him, is moreover a strongly syntagmatic art). Naturally all this technique was conceived as a function of a political meaning. As a function of, but perhaps not considering it, and it is here that we touch upon the second aspect of Brechtian ambiguity. I wonder if this *committed* sense of Brecht's work is not, finally, in its own way, a *suspended* sense. Of course there is a meaning in Brecht's theater, a very strong meaning, but this meaning is always a question."²⁰

Finally, I would like the reader not to skim, but instead to read the two final quotations very carefully:²¹

"Here we return to what I was saying in the beginning: a film is beautiful because there is a story. A story with a beginning, an end, a suspense. Currently modernity all too frequently seems like a way to cheat with story and psychology. The most immediate criterion of modernity for a work is to not be 'psychological' in the traditional sense of the term. But at the same time, one doesn't know how to expel this psychology, this famous objectivity between beings, this relational vertigo to which (this is the paradox) works of art no longer devote themselves, but only the social sciences and medicine. Psychology today is only found in psychoanalysis, which—regardless of the intelligence they devote to it, regardless of the open-mindedness with which they approach it—is practiced by physicians: the 'soul' has become a pathological fact. There is a sort of renunciation by modern works of relations between humans, between individuals. The great movements of ideological emancipation—let us say, Marxism, in order to speak clearly—have ignored the private individual, and without a doubt they could not do otherwise. Now we know that in this there is still some fraud, there is still something that doesn't square. So long as there are conjugal scenes, there will be questions to be asked."

And further on:

"But if the structuralist law of the rotations of needs and forms . . . takes effect, we should soon arrive at a more existential art. That is to say that the great antipsychological declarations of the last ten years (declarations in which I myself participated, as was proper) should be overturned and pass out of fashion."

Now, in concrete terms, what is this "sense" of things beyond their meaning if compared with the concrete moment of the life and history which we are living?

What is this *newly current psychology*?

At what point should the rotations of needs and forms be seized?

RB

What are the real questions to be asked in order to suspend the sense of a work?

Barthes presents the problems, analyzing them on the level of pure observation. What scientist isn't expected to surrender to the feelings which are exhaled from the magma, to lose himself in the doing?

But it seems to me that if we observe that "something" which is happening in the bourgeois world, this pouring of negative and ideal, violent and nonviolent values into daily life, this re-presentation of "naked and poor" problematics, we will, perhaps, begin to have some confused answers. . . . It seems to me, in short, that in any case a "reality" to be evoked is not lacking and, on the contrary, that it is guilty not to do so. And since that reality speaks to us every day with its language, transcending our signifieds—in an as yet undefined "sense" (it is only certain that it is desperation and furious confrontation)—it is well, it seems to me, to bend our signifieds to it! If for no other reason than to ask questions in amphibological, ambiguous works whose rules are "suspended" (like Brecht, correctly understood by Barthes), but which are not at all uncommitted in this—on the contrary!

This "something," therefore, which implies suspended rules and a tension without a goal, which is presented as a novelty in the world, while on the one hand it commits us to an expansion and perhaps to a modification of Marxist analysis, is presented, in any case, at least in part and originally, as independent of Marxism and therefore of the working-class world. It is a violent force, prefigured only partially and nominally by similar precedents, which springs forth precisely from the inside of the *petite bourgeoisie* and from the archaic and preindustrial peasant world (now in development).

Is it therefore a dark force, in scandalous rapport with neo-capitalism, which wants to become integrated with the rational and organized labor force which is temporarily at a standstill?

And to this negative-positive force (in its anarchic violence, in its pacifist rage, in its religion of democratic mysticism, etc.) is the purely negative force of the Nazi rebirth added? But can one speak of a Nazi rebirth? Did Nazism ever die? Were we not crazy to believe it an episode? Isn't it Nazism which defined the *petite bourgeoisie* as "normal" and which continues to define it? Is there any reason the racist mass murderers must be finished with their concentration camps, their gas chambers, etc.?

Are the new forces which are unleashed in opposition to the rationalism of this "normal" bourgeoisie which massacres millions of Jews, etc., perhaps a kind of antibody of salvation? Is their death wish healthy?

Is it modern, the mentality of a son of Sicilian, Algerian, or

Venezuelan peasants who, instead of the Chinese road, takes the road of neocapitalism, but within maintains intact the dignity of democratic idealism?

Is it modern, the mentality of the son of Roumanian peasants who participates, as protagonist, in the industrial revolution of the countryside along the Danube, seeing the world literally transform itself before his eyes? (not to speak of what happens in the peasant world in deepest China), etc., etc.

To finish then naively, grossly, but without misunderstandings, there are some ethical positions already adopted which scandalously contradict *both Marxist rationalism and bourgeois rationalism*; they exercise each other, but in a strict connection which is perhaps the not yet exactly rationalized "meaning" of the following points:

a) A growing revolution against the bourgeoisie in the bosom of the bourgeoisie in forms and quantities never so far experienced, which scandalizes the ideology of the bourgeois non-ideology, but at the same time scandalizes the Marxist ideology, which is still blocked on this phenomenon at the old, boring condemnations of every anarchy* and is moreover incapable of assuming in one synthetic thought the sincerely revolutionary will. [This will], coming to birth within an almost mystically conceived democracy, establishes, at least in America, the basis for a civil war (which the more emotional, the Nazi minuteman and the black extremist, are already fighting as an armed conflict).

b) The presence of the Third World (including part of Italy), object of racial hatred on the part of the bourgeoisie and of substantial incomprehension on the part of Marxism (which tries paternalistically to be its guide). The center of this presence as scandal, struggle, intensified need for the most elementary human rights, is still the American black world.

c) The halting of the revolutionary impetus in the nations where the Communist revolution has taken place (Stalinism, bureaucracy, etc.), an impetus which continues only where the industrial revolution of the countryside is in action (for example, Roumania and China). But it is fatal; as soon as the industrial revolution of the countryside has been achieved, with the massive presence of the peasant world (archaic and in need of myths; moralistic, con-

*Marx's old and correct condemnations of anarchy are still being repeated. But what did Marx indicate as the final goal of the revolution? The abolition of the State through the destruction of the institutions on which it was founded (for example, the family) and complete decentralization. This has not happened. Therefore, if Marx was correct in being angry with the likable, but in fact slightly crazy persons who were in competition with him in the work of destruction of state power, a Communist functionary now has absolutely no more right to be angry. Instead, to condemn anarchy today, when in Communist countries the centralism of power and bureaucracy are triumphant, sounds ridiculous and fatal.

tentious; naive; provident; right-thinking; in short, petit bourgeois, as Lenin said), a sort of enormous swamp is formed into which the revolutionary impetus of the workers and of the intellectuals slowly sinks: after every industrial peasant revolution there will be a Stalinism (see now, perhaps, Cuba).

d) The uninterrupted presence of Nazism as the only real bourgeois ideology (see provincial America, Dallas, etc., etc.).

No one fails to perceive that these lengthy lists are out of proportion concerning the avant-garde. Exactly.

But I don't want to prevaricate; the reader should take these lists of international facts simply as beginnings of real situations which need to be evoked or witnessed; so strong (still outside any rationalistic codification) as to substitute the old facts (well identified and rationally codified) from which spring those currents of reality which had nourished the old commitment. And they impose themselves as expressive necessities, making out-of-date, with their burning topicality, the captious, elusive, vulgar, and—in the best of cases—futile answer of the Italian avant-garde (which could have a sense so long as the world seemed made up of old bourgeois of the *Confindustria*²² or of Communist functionaries). In short, the same "new meaning" of the things of the world which marks the end of the old commitment also indicates the end of the avant-garde.

(1966)

Notes

1. Lucien Goldmann, *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London, 1975), p. 15.
2. See "The Will of Dante to Be a Poet," n. 3.
3. *Padrone*, translated here as "boss," is a highly charged and politicized word referring to the exploitative class of employers and proprietors.
4. The word order here is a deliberate imitation of Pasolini's poetic style.
5. The Piacenza Marxists were a reformist group of Communists.
6. *Abatino*, "little friar," has the pejorative meaning of someone who is ineffectual, even a nonentity. The term goes back to the practice of younger sons in noble families having little choice but to enter the priesthood, usually without a genuine vocation. Often they had merely inconsequential religious duties and were reputed to devote themselves to women.
7. A member of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement), a neo-Fascist party.
8. Futurism was a literary movement founded by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in 1909 which later expanded to include all the arts. It celebrated the machine and modern technology.
9. *Lassa*: a series of verses with a single rhyme or assonance composed in French or Spanish during the Middle Ages.
10. *Luminismo* is a technique of painting based on a rigorously outlined use of light.

11. The "Lampostyl character" is in an advertisement for colored pencils showing the head of a man with colored pencils as hair.

12. The *fiocco* is a long strip of material tied as a large floppy bow, part of the school uniform of an Italian child.

13. Pasolini's choice of Sanguineti in this context is not fortuitous: the two had a long history of literary disagreement. See Enzo Siciliano, *Pasolini*, trans. John Shepley (New York: Random House, 1982), pp. 191-93.

14. The sense of this passage seems to be as follows: The only language of nature is being, i.e., data, whereas the language of human reality is twofold, consisting of both acts and representations; hence, Pasolini calls it an "example."

15. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: une archeologie des sciences humaines* (Paris, 1966).

16. Pasolini cites an Italian translation of "Entretien avec Roland Barthes," *Cahiers du cinéma*, n. 147 (September, 1963), which appeared as "Cinema metaforico e cinema metonimico" ["Metaphoric Cinema and Metonymic Cinema"], ed. Michel Delahaye and Jacques Rivette, *Cinema e Film*, 1 (Winter 1966-67), 9-14, tr. Piero Anchisi.

17. See Introduction, p. xxii and n. 16, for Jakobson's use of metonymy and metaphor.

18. Barthes, p. 12.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 14. Emphasis has been removed from the following two passages.

22. The Confederation of Industry, the principal organization of the Italian business community.

Appendices

CIVIL WAR*

Concerning life and political conflict in the United States, the observations which I was quoting by heart and summarizing are owed to American writers of the New Left, and precisely to two ideologists of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), Tom Hayden and Jimmy Garrett. The former commented on the fact that Communist collectivization does not necessarily (historically) bring the worker to the complete sharing of power, that is, to decisions about his own destiny, and that, if anything, the contrary is true; that is, that the creation of an "anticommunity" in which the worker arrives at an intensified democratic awareness of the duty and the right to complete participation in power can lead, as a consequence, to the collectivization of property. The observation on the Communist as "an empty man" is attributable to Jimmy Garrett. I will cite it: "Friend, Communists are empty, they are empty men. They have the same stale ideas, the same bureaucracy. . . . When a Communist mixes with us, a 'Commie' dies, and a person develops."

The observations are not mine, but I have in some way adopted them.

In Czechoslovakia, in Hungary, and in Roumania I lived among intellectuals and therefore it was through them, through their restlessness, their malaise, that I felt the restlessness and the malaise of those countries; I believe one can schematically and summarily indicate their cause in the fact that "the revolution did not continue," that is, the State was not decentralized, did not disappear, and the workers in the factories do not truly participate in nor are responsible for political power and are instead dominated—who doesn't know and admit it by now?—by a bureaucracy which is revolutionary in name only. And naturally calls "petit-bourgeois revolutionaries" those who instead still think that the "revolution must continue."

That in America there are Marxist nonideologists who have understood this in democratic terms—but in terms of an intensified and almost mystical extremist democracy, which, as such, is revolu-

**Paese Sera*, Friday, November 18, 1966, in answer to a letter from a reader. [*Paese Sera* is a left-wing Roman daily paper. The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

tionary in its context (the creation of an "anticommunity" in the breast of the American community)—cannot help but fill us with interest and enthusiasm.

SNCC, SDS, and an infinite number of other movements, which, in their chaotic whole, form the American New Left, are something which reminds me of the Resistance period.

In America, granted the very brief nature of my stay, I lived many hours in the clandestine climate of conflict, of revolutionary urgency, of hope, that was proper to the Europe of 1944 and 1945.¹ In Europe everything is finished; in America one has the impression that everything is about to begin. I don't want to say that there is civil war in America, or perhaps not even anything of the kind, nor do I want to prophesy it. One lives there, however, as if on the eve of great things. Those who belong to the New Left (which does not exist, it is only an idea, an ideal) are recognizable immediately, and among them is born that kind of love that tied the partisans together. There are the heroes, the dead in battle—Andrew, James, and Mickey,² and infinite others—and the great movements, the great stages of an immense popular movement, concentrated on the problem of the emancipation of blacks and now on the war in Viet Nam.

Whoever has not seen a pacifist and nonviolent demonstration in New York has missed a great human experience, comparable only, I repeat, to the great days of Hope of the forties.

One night in Harlem I shook hands with a group of young blacks who were wearing sweaters with a panther insignia (but they shook my hand with suspicion, because I was white): [the insignia of] an extremist movement which is preparing for an actual armed conflict.

One afternoon, in the Village, I saw a small group of neo-Nazis who were demonstrating in favor of the war in Viet Nam; near them, as if gripped by a strange and tranquil rapture, two elderly men and a girl who played a guitar were singing the pacifist songs of the New Left, those of the Village, which also includes the Left of the beatniks and the drug addicts.

I followed a young black trade unionist who took me to the chapter of his union, a small union which has only a few hundred members in Harlem, which fights against the unemployment of blacks. I followed him to the house of a friend of his, a mason who hurt himself on the job and who, lying on his poor bed, welcomed us with the smile of a friend, of an accomplice, overcome by our forgotten partisan love.

I went up to a "bourgeois" apartment in the most sordid part of the Village to listen to the hysterical laughter and the aberrant acrimony of an intellectual woman married to a black, who blathered rancor against the old American communism and against the Left of the drug culture, but as if her anger and her burning delusion should

have immediate answers in her world, should become "action" immediately.

I lived, in short, at the very heart of a situation characterized by discontent and exaltation, by desperation and hope, of complete confrontation of *the establishment*.* I don't know how all of this will end, or if it will end in any way. The fact remains that thousands of students (approximately the percentage of partisans with respect to the population of Europe during the forties) come down from the North and go to the Black Belt to fight beside the blacks with a violent and almost mystical democratic conscientiousness to not "manipulate them," to not intervene among them even through gentle coercion, to not claim for themselves—almost neurotically—not even the shadow of any form of "leadership."[†] And, what is more important, with the awareness that the black problem, formally resolved with the acknowledgment of their civil rights, begins now; that it is a social and not a theoretical problem.

There are many more things to be added. The protest, the pure and simple confrontation, the rebellion against consumerism; I am referring to the phenomenon of the beatniks, which among us has been stated in terms of pure curiosity and—is there any need to underline it?—with irony. The Communists themselves, at least so far as I know, in Italy, too, prefer to remain silent on this point, or even to utter words of condemnation in which the old Stalinist moralism and Italian provincialism find an obscure identification. In reality, in the great American cities, those who get drunk, who abuse drugs, who refuse to become integrated into the safe world of work accomplish something more than a series of old and codified anarchic acts: they live a tragedy.

And because they only know how to live it and not to judge it, they die of it.

The thousands of drug-induced suicides in reality are martyrs, no more nor less than those who are killed by the white racists of the South. They have the same purity; they are equally beyond the miserable human calculations of those who accept the "quality of life" offered by established societies.

It is true. Everything I saw, or thought I saw in New York, stands out against a dark background—inconceivable for us because it is inadmissible—that is, against everyday American life, the life of conservatism, which takes place in a silence which is much more intense than the "howls" that reach us from the Left. In this background silence, neutral and terrifying, phenomena of actual collective insanity take place, that is, of a somehow codified hatred which

* Pasolini uses the English word "establishment" here.—Ed.

† Pasolini uses the English word "leadership" here.—Ed.

is difficult to describe. It is racist hatred—that is, the external manifestation of the profound aberration of every conservatism and every fascism. It is a hatred which has no reason to exist. In fact, it doesn't exist. Those who are affected by it believe they experience it, but in reality "are not able" to prove it. How and why in fact should a poor white hate a black? However, it is precisely the poor whites of the entire South who, in practice, live by this hatred. It is born of a false idea of self and therefore of reality; and so it itself is false—it is a completely alienated and unrecognizable feeling. The final and most tragic manifestation of this form of life is the un-avenged murder of Kennedy, a manifestation of that civil war which doesn't explode but which nevertheless is being fought within the souls of Americans.

To speak about America always and only in terms of neo-capitalism and technological revolution therefore seems to me partial and sectarian. It seems absurd, but it is precisely concerning America that the problem of underdevelopment and misery acquires a strange and violent meaning. Everyone knows, in fact, that these are the years in which the peasant world of all the Earth—the Third World—is appearing on the threshold of history (with a foot in prehistory), and the scandal is that after the however great episodes of the Algerian and Cuban revolutions the center of the fight for the revolution of the Third World is precisely America. The black problem, united in such an inextricable and contorted fashion to that of the "poor whites" (enormous in number, more than we think), is a Third World problem. And if this is scandalous for the working-class conscience of the European Communist parties, it is so even more for the American capitalistic conscience which believes that it is objectively on the clear road of technical progress and economic opulence. Therefore, we will never cease to measure enough, in all senses, the range of the black problem. Because, I repeat, the problem of poor or ex-poor whites is connected to it in an insanely contradictory manner. In fact, two or three generations have not been enough to completely transform the psychology of the enormous masses of immigrants. These (I saw this very well in the Italian quarter) maintain first of all an attitude of veneration for the country that has welcomed them, and now that they are citizens of it, for its institutions. They are still children, children who are too obedient or too desperate. In the second place they have brought with them, and have conserved within, that which is the principal characteristic of the peasants of underdeveloped—somehow pre-historic—areas which De Martino defines as the "fear of losing presence." These are the foundations of popular Fascist racism.

How different Americans are from each other because of their different humble origins cannot be said enough.

Perhaps it is for this reason that they want so desperately to be

alike, and if they base their anticommunism on the fact that communism would effect a leveling of individuals, it is because they want first of all and desperately to be leveled. Precisely in order to forget their different and inferior origins, which differentiate them like brands. Every American has an indelible mark stamped on his face. The image of an average Italian, Frenchman, German, or Englishman is conceivable, and actually can be represented. The image of an average American is absolutely inconceivable and is impossible to represent. This is the thing which perhaps most filled me with amazement in America. All one does is talk about the "average American," and then this "average American"—physically, materially, visually—doesn't exist! How can one summarize in one "type" all the extraordinary types who wander around Manhattan? How can one synthesize in a single face the tense Anglo-Saxon face, the crazy Irish one, the sad Italian one, the pale Greek one, the savage Puerto Rican one, the neurotic German one, the funny Chinese one, the adorable Negro one. . . .

It is therefore the "fear of losing presence" and the snobbishness of neocitizenship which make it impossible for Americans—this strange but real mixture of subproletariat and bourgeoisie, deeply and honestly closed in its bourgeois loyalty—to reflect on the idea which they have of themselves. Which therefore remains "false," as in every alienating environment of total industrialization.

In fact, I tried to ask some Americans, all those I could, if they knew what racism is (a question which implies precisely and particularly a reflection on the idea of self). No one knew how to answer. Except for a few independent directors who, knowing Europe more lovingly, had some idea of Marxism; all the others resorted to incredibly naive ontologies. (There were only some exact explanations of a psychoanalytic nature which, however, touched only one side of the problem, or better, the human conditions in which the problem can be posed).

In short, for me the most violent, dramatic, and defining note of the "quality of American life" is a negative characteristic: the absence of class consciousness, the immediate effect, precisely, of the false idea of self of every individual admitted, almost by concession or by grace, within the limits of the petit-bourgeois privileges of industrial well-being and of state power.

But there are strong contradictions in this (which I am certainly not the first to note!); for example, the overflowing strength of unionism, which is manifested in incredibly efficient and grandiose strikes in which it is impossible to understand how a stable class consciousness does not take shape, while it is quite clear to us that those so-well-organized strikes, so ironlike in their compactness,

are no more than the vindication of the exploited against the exploiters.

The extraordinary novelty (for a European like me) is that class consciousness, instead, dawns in Americans in completely new and almost scandalous situations for Marxism.³

Class consciousness, to make way in the head of an American, needs the long, contorted road of an enormously complex operation; that is, it needs the mediation of—let's admit it—the bourgeois or petit-bourgeois idealism which gives meaning to the life of every American and which he absolutely cannot leave out of consideration. There they call it spiritualism. But, be it idealism in our understanding, or spiritualism in theirs, they are both ambiguous and inexact. Perhaps, more accurately, it is a question of moralism (Anglo-Saxon in origin and naively adopted by other Americans) which dominates and molds every aspect of life; and which, even in contemporary middle-class literature, for example, is exactly the opposite of realism. Americans always need to idealize in art (also and primarily where bourgeois taste is concerned; for example, the "illustrative" representatives of their life and their cities in average or ugly films are forms of an incurable need for idealization).

Therefore, instead of in strikes or in other forms of class conflict, the consciousness of one's social reality dawns in pacifist and non-violent manifestations which are dominated, precisely, by an intelligent spiritualism. Which, moreover, is objectively—at least for me—a stupendous fact which made me fall in love with America. It is a vision of the world of people who have arrived, through roads which we consider wrong—but which are historically what they are, that is, correct—at the maturation of an idea of self as simple citizen (perhaps like the Athenians or the Romans?), possessing a deep and honest notion of democracy (pushed to almost mystical and revolutionary manifestations, we have said, in certain exponents of SNCC or SDS). In short, to reach an awareness of self and of society which is not only formally democratic, the truly free American has needed to pass through the calvary of the blacks and share it (and now through the calvary of Viet Nam). Only today, in the last few years, in the last few months—I would say, that is, after the at least formal acknowledgment of the civil rights of blacks—has it been understood that the black question is at its beginning, and that it is a social question and not a mere democratic spiritualism and a code of civility.

The immense void which opens as a chasm in individual Americans and in the whole of American society—that is, the lack of a Marxist culture—like every void, violently demands to be filled. It is therefore filled by the spiritualism of which I spoke, which, having first become revolutionary democratic radicalism, is now run

through by a new social consciousness which, not accepting Marxism explicitly, is presented as total confrontation and anarchic desperation.

It is from this that the Other America is born. It is from this, and not from anything else, that the premises of a possible Third American Party are formed (which is being talked about with great and naive circumspection, as if it were something scandalously iconoclastic, either with hope or with hostility; for example, in the two or three cities where an embryonic form of this party has presented itself at the elections—always as a result of the student movement of which I spoke—not only has it been defeated, but it has also caused the defeat of moderates to the benefit of racists).

Now, I live in a society which has just emerged from misery and is superstitiously attached to the small portion of well-being that it has achieved as if it were a stable condition, bringing to this new course of its history a common sense which could be appropriate in the fields, among the flocks, or in the small artisan shops, but which reveals itself instead to be stupid, cowardly, and petty, today, in our world. An irredeemable society, irreparably bourgeois, without revolutionary traditions, not even liberal ones. The world of culture—in which I live because of a literary vocation, which reveals itself every day to be more extraneous to this society and to this world—is the delegated locality of stupidity, cowardice, and pettiness. I cannot accept anything of the world in which I live: neither the apparatuses of state centralism—bureaucracy, legal system, army, school, and all the rest—nor its cultured minorities. In the case in point, I am completely outside the aspect of current culture. I am deaf to the purely verbal destruction of the institutions of the establishment* which says nothing about those who operate them, and I am deaf to the puristic and neoliterary search for revenge. Let's say it: I have remained isolated, to grow old with myself and my repugnance to speak both of commitment and lack of commitment. Thus I cannot not fall in love with American culture and not have perceived in it a literary rationale full of novelty, a new period of the Resistance—I repeat—which, however, is completely devoid of that certain risorgimental and, so to speak, pseudoclassical spirit which, seen from a contemporary perspective, somewhat impoverishes the European Resistance (whose hopes, moreover, were contained within the circle of the Marxist perspectives of those years and which later revealed themselves to be narrow and conventional). What is required of an "independent" American intellectual is all of himself, a complete sincerity. Since the days of Machado I hadn't experienced such a brotherly reading as that of Ginsberg. And wasn't it marvelous, the

*Pasolini uses the English word "establishment" here.—Ed.

drunken passage of Kerouac through Italy, which provoked the irony, the boredom, the disapproval of the stupid men of letters and petty journalists of Italy?⁴ The American intellectuals of the New Left (because where there is a struggle there is always a guitar and a man who sings) appear to do exactly what the verse of an innocent song of the Black Resistance says: "You gotta throw your body into the fight."

Here is the new motto of a real and not boringly moralistic commitment; throw one's body into the fight. . . . Who is there in Italy, in Europe, who writes pushed by such a great, such a desperate force of confrontation? Who feels this necessity to be in opposition, as a primal necessity, believing it to be new in history, absolutely meaningful, and at the same time full of death and the future?

Notes

1. In October of 1966 Pasolini made his first visit to the United States in order to attend the New York Film Festival, which was showing one of his films, *Uccellacci e Uccellini* [*Hawks and Sparrows*].

2. Civil Rights activists Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney were murdered in Mississippi during a black voter registration drive in the summer of 1964.

3. "For Marxism" in the sense of "from the Marxist point of view." American class consciousness has not developed out of class conflict, as a classical Marxist analysis would require, but out of what Pasolini calls "spiritualism."

4. Kerouac made this trip to Italy for a publishing house in the fall of 1966.

THE PCI TO THE YOUNG!!*

(Notes in Verse for a Prose Poem Followed by an "Apology")

It's sad. The polemic against
the PCI should have been made during the first half
of the past decade. You are late, children.
And it doesn't matter at all if then you weren't yet born . . .
Now the journalists of all the world (including
those of television)
kiss (as I believe one still says in the language
of the Universities) your ass. Not me, friends.
You have the faces of spoiled children.
Good blood doesn't lie.
You have the same bad eye.
You are scared, uncertain, desperate
(very good!) but you also know how to be
bullies, blackmailers, and sure of yourselves;
petit-bourgeois prerogatives, friends.
When yesterday at Valle Giulia you fought
with policemen,¹
I sympathized with the policemen!
Because policemen are children of the poor.
They come from the outskirts, be they rustic or urban.
As for me, I know very well
the way they were as children and youths,
the precious dollar, the father still a youth himself,
because of the misery, which doesn't give authority.
The mother, calloused like a porter, or tender,
like a bird, because of some illness;
the many brothers; the hovel
among the meadows with the red sage (on the subdivided land
of others); the slums
overlooking the sewers; or the apartments in the big
lower-class tenements, etc., etc.
And then, look at how they dress them: like clowns,
with that rough cloth that stinks of rations,
the orderly room, and people.² Worst of all, naturally,
is the psychological state to which they are reduced
(for roughly sixty dollars a month);
with a smile no longer,
with friends in the world no longer,
separated,

* *Nuovi Argomenti*, n. 10 (April-June 1968). [The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

excluded (in an exclusion which is without equal);
 humiliated by the loss of the qualities of men
 for those of policemen (being hated generates hatred).
 They are twenty years old, your age, dear boys and girls.
 We obviously agree against the police as institution.
 But get mad at the Legal System and you will see!
 The boy policemen
 which you, out of the sacred hooliganism (a noble tradition
 of the Risorgimento)
 of spoiled children, have beaten up,
 belong to the other social class.

At Valle Giulia, yesterday, we have thus had a fragment
 of class conflict; and you, my friends (even though on the side
 of reason), were the rich,
 while the policemen (who were in the
 wrong) were poor. A nice victory, then,
 yours! In these cases,

the policemen are given flowers, friends.
*Popolo and Corriere della Sera, Newsweek and Monde*³
 kiss your ass. You are their children,
 their hope, their future; if they reproach you
 they are certainly not preparing a class conflict
 against you! If anything,
 the old civil war.

For those who, intellectual or laborer,
 are outside of your fight, the idea is very amusing
 that a young bourgeois beats up an old
 bourgeois, and that an old bourgeois sends to prison
 a young bourgeois. Blandly

the era of Hitler is returning; the bourgeoisie
 loves to punish itself with its own hands.

I beg forgiveness of those thousand or two thousand of my young
 brothers

who work in Trento or in Turin,
 in Pavia or in Pisa,
 in Florence and a bit also in Rome,
 but I must say; the Student Movement
 does not frequent the gospels whose reading
 its middle-aged flatterers attribute to them,
 to feel young and to create a blackmailing virginity;
 students really know only one thing:
 the moralism of the father, magistrate or professional,
 the conformist violence of the elder brother
 (naturally set forth on the road of the father),
 the hatred for culture which the mother has, she of peasant
 origins, even if distant.

This, dear children, you know.

And you apply it through two unavoidable feelings:
 the awareness of your rights (it is known, democracy

takes only you into consideration) and the aspiration
to power.

Yes, your slogans always concern
the taking of power.

I read in your beards your impotent ambitions,
in your pallor your desperate snobbishness,
in your elusive eyes, your sexual dissociation,
in your excessive health, your arrogance, in your lack of health, your
contempt

(only for those few of you who come from the lowest
bourgeoisie, or from a working-class family,
do these defects have any nobility;
know thyself and the school of Barbiana!)⁴
You take over the universities
but say that the same idea should come
to some young workers.

And then:

Will *Corriere della Sera* and *Popolo*, *Newsweek* and *Monde*
have such concern

in trying to understand their problems?

Will the police limit themselves to taking a few blows
in an occupied factory?

It's a banal observation;

and blackmailing. But above all vain:

because you are bourgeois

and therefore anticommunist. The workers, they,
have remained in 1950 and further back.

An idea as ancient as that of the Resistance
(which should have been protested twenty years ago,
and so much the worse for you if you were not yet born)
still thrives in the people's breasts, in the outskirts.

It may be that the workers don't speak either French or English,
and only a few, poor things, at night, in their cells
have taken the pains to learn a bit of Russian.

Quit thinking about your rights,
quit asking for power.

A redeemed bourgeois must renounce his rights,
and banish from his soul, forever,
the idea of power. All this is liberalism; leave it
to Bob Kennedy.

Teachers are made occupying the factories
not the universities; your flatterers (even the Communists)
don't tell you the banal truth: that you are a new
idealist kind of *qualunquista*,⁵ like your fathers,
like your fathers, who are still children.

Look at

the Americans, your adorable contemporaries,
with their foolish flowers, are inventing
a "new" revolutionary language!

They invent it day by day!
 But you can't do it because in Europe there already is one:
 can you ignore it?
 Yes, you want to ignore it (with great satisfaction
 of the *Times* and of *Tempo*).
 You ignore it going, with the moralism of the deep provinces,
 "more to the left." Strange,
 abandoning the revolutionary language
 of the poor, old, official Communist
 Party of Togliatti,
 you have adopted a heretical variant of it
 but on the basis of the lowest jargon
 of sociologists without ideology (or of the bureaucratic daddies).
 So speaking,
 you ask for *everything* in words,
 while with the facts, you ask for *only that*
to which you have a right (as good bourgeois children):
 a series of reforms that can't be put off,
 the application of new pedagogical methods,
 and the renewal of the state organism.
 Good for you! Sacred sentiments!
 May the good bourgeois star help you!
 Inebriated by your victory against young men
 of the police forced by poverty to be servants
 (and inebriated by the interest of bourgeois public opinion
 with which you behave like women
 who are not in love, who ignore and maltreat
 their rich lover),
 you set aside the only really dangerous instrument
 to fight against your fathers:
 that is, communism.
 I hope that you have understood
 that to be puritan
 is one way to avoid
 real revolutionary action.
 But instead, children, go attack Federations!
 Go invade Cells!
 Go occupy the offices of the Central Committee! Go, go
 camp out in Via delle Botteghe Oscure!⁶
 If you want power, at least take over the power
 of a party which nevertheless is in the opposition
 (even if battered, because of the authority of gentlemen
 in double-breasted suits, *bocce* fans,⁷ lovers of litotes,
 bourgeois contemporaries of your stupid fathers)
 and has as theoretical objective the destruction of Power.
 That it should decide, in the meantime, to destroy
 those aspects of the bourgeoisie which it has in itself,
 I doubt very much, even with your contribution,
 if, as I said, good blood doesn't lie . . .

In any case: the PCI to the young!

.
 But, ah, what am I suggesting to you? What am I
 recommending? Towards what am I pushing you?
 I repent, I repent!
 I have taken the road which leads to the lesser evil,
 may God damn me. Don't listen to me.
 Ahi, ahi, ahi,
 blackmailed blackmailer,
 I was blowing the trumpets of common sense!
 I stopped barely in time,
 saving at the same time,
 fanatic dualism and ambiguity . . .
 But I have reached the edge of shame . . .
 (Oh God! must I take into consideration
 the eventuality of fighting the Civil War alongside you
 putting aside my old idea of Revolution?)

APOLOGY

What are "ugly verses" (as presumably these of "The PCI to the Young!!")? It's even too simple; ugly verses are those that are not sufficient alone to express what the author wants to express; that is, in them the significations are altered by the joint significations, and together the joint significations obscure the significations.

Furthermore, one knows that poetry draws signs from different semantic fields, making them fit together, often arbitrarily; thus it makes a sort of stratification of every sign, of which every stratum corresponds to one meaning of the sign taken from a different semantic field, but provisionally joined (by a demon) with the others.

So: the ugly verses are, yes, understandable—but to understand them goodwill is necessary.

I question the goodwill of many of the readers of these ugly verses; also because in many cases I will have to allow for them, so to speak, "a bad will in good faith." That is, a political passion as valid as mine, which has hopes and bitterness, idols and hatreds, like mine.

Therefore let it be clear that I wrote these ugly verses on several registers at the same time, and so they are all "doubled," that is, ironic and auto-ironic. Everything is said *in quotation marks*. The piece on the policemen is a piece of *ars retorica*, which an insane Bolognese notary public could define, in the case in point, a "*captatio malevolentiae*."⁸ The quotation marks are therefore those of provocation. I hope that the bad faith of my good reader "accepts" the provocation, given that it is a provocation at a friendly level.

(Those which cannot be accepted are the provocations of the Fascists and of the police). The two excerpts concerning the old workers who spend their evenings in their cell learning Russian and the evolution of the old, good, battered PCI are also enclosed in quotation marks; above and beyond the fact that objectively such a figure of a worker and of the PCI *also* corresponds to "reality," here, in my poem, they are rhetorical and paradoxical figures—still provocative.

The only nonprovocative passage, even if stated in a fatuous tone, is the final parenthetical one. Here I posit a real problem, albeit through a bitter and ironic screen (I could not immediately convert the demon which visited me right after the battle of Valle Giulia—and I also insist on the chronology for the nonphilologists): in the future a dilemma exists—civil war or revolution?

I can't do like many of my colleagues who pretend to confuse the two things (or really confuse them), and taken with the "student psychosis" have thrown themselves like dead weights on the side of the students (flattering them and receiving scorn in return). I can't even state that every revolutionary possibility has been exhausted and that therefore we must opt for "civil war" (as happens in America and West Germany because of a different historical destiny). In fact, as I have said repeatedly, the bourgeoisie fights the civil war against itself. Nor, after all, am I so cynical (like the French) as to think that one could make revolution "taking advantage" of the civil war unleashed by the students—only to put them aside, or perhaps eliminate them.

It is from this state of mind that these ugly verses were born, whose dominant characteristic is, in any case, provocation (which they express indiscriminately, because of their ugliness). But, and this is the point, why was I so provocative with the students (so much so that some unctuous newspaper of the bosses⁹ can speculate on it)?

The reason is this: up to and including my generation, young people had the bourgeoisie before them as an "object," a "separate" world (separate *from them*, because, naturally, I am speaking of the excluded young people; excluded by a trauma, and let us take as a typical trauma that of the nineteen-year-old Lenin who saw his brother hanged by the forces of order). We could thus look at the bourgeoisie objectively, from the outside (even if we were terribly involved with it: history, school, church, anguish); the way in which to look at the bourgeoisie objectively was offered to us, according to a typical scheme, by the way of looking at it, by *what was not bourgeois*; workers and peasants (of what would later be called the Third World). Therefore we, young intellectuals of twenty or thirty years ago (and, through privilege of class, students), could be anti-bourgeois also outside the bourgeoisie, through the optics offered to

us from the other social classes (revolutionary or rebellious as they might be).

We grew up, therefore, with the idea of the revolution in our heads; of the worker-peasant revolution (Russia 1917, China, Cuba, Algeria, Viet Nam). As a consequence, we also made of the traumatic hatred for the bourgeoisie a correct perspective in which to integrate our action in a non-escapist future (at least partially, because we are all a bit sentimental).

For a young person of today things are different: for him it is much more difficult to look at the bourgeoisie objectively through the eyes of another social class. Because the bourgeoisie is triumphing, it is transforming both the workers and the ex-colonial peasants into bourgeois. In short, through neocapitalism the bourgeoisie is becoming the human condition. Those who are born into this entropy cannot in any way, metaphysically, be outside of it. It's over. For this I provoke the young. They are, presumably, the last generation which sees workers and peasants; the next generation will only see bourgeois entropy around itself.

Now I, personally (my private exclusion, from boyhood, much more dreadful than that which is the lot of a Negro, for example, or a Jew), and publicly (Fascism and the war, with which I opened my eyes on life; how many hangings, how many hookings!),¹⁰ am too traumatized by the bourgeoisie, and my hatred for it is by now pathological. I can hope for nothing from it, neither as a totality nor as a creator of antibodies against itself (as happens in entropies. The antibodies which are born in the American entropy have a life and a reason for being only because in America there are the blacks, who have the function for a young American that poor workers and peasants had for us as boys).

Given this my "total" lack of faith in the bourgeoisie, I therefore resist the idea of civil war, which, perhaps through the student explosion, the bourgeoisie would fight against itself. Already the young people of this generation are, I would say physically, much more bourgeois than we. Well? Don't I have the right to provoke them? In what other way should I put myself in rapport with them, if not thus? The demon who tempted me is a demon—it is known—full of vices; this time he also had the vice of impatience and of indifference for that old artisan work which is art. He made a single rough bundle of all the semantic fields, even lamenting that he is not also pragmatic, that is, to also embrace the semantic fields which are the seat of nonlinguistic communication: physical presence and action. . . . To conclude, then, the young students of today belong to a "totality" (the "semantic fields" on which they express themselves through both linguistic and nonlinguistic communication). They are tightly unified and enclosed; they are not, therefore,

capable, I believe, of understanding by themselves that—when they are defined as “petit bourgeois” in their self-criticisms—they commit an error which is both elementary and unconscious; in fact the petit bourgeois of today no longer has peasant grandfathers, but great-grandfathers and great-great-grandfathers. He has not lived an antibourgeois revolutionary (worker’s) experience pragmatically (and from this the inane gropings in the search for working-class comrades); he has experienced, instead, the first type of neo-capitalist quality of life, with the problems of total industrialization. Thus *the petit bourgeois of today is no longer the one who is defined in the classics of Marxism, for example, in Lenin*. (As, for example, contemporary China is no longer the China of Lenin; and therefore, quoting the example of “China” from Lenin’s little book on imperialism would be insane.) Furthermore, the young people of today (they should hurry up and get rid of the horrible classist denomination of students and become young intellectuals) do not realize how repulsive a contemporary petit bourgeois is, and that this is the model to which conform both laborers (notwithstanding the persistent optimism of the Communist canon) and poor peasants (notwithstanding their mythicization operated by Marcusean and Fanonian intellectuals, me included, but *ante litteram*).*

Students can arrive at this Manichean awareness of bourgeois evil in this way (to recapitulate):

a) Reanalyzing—outside of sociology as well as the classics of Marxism—the petit bourgeois that they are (that we are) today.

b) Abandoning their ontological and tautological self-definition as “students” and accepting that they are simply “intellectuals.”

c) Implementing the last possible choice—on the eve of the assimilation of bourgeois history to human history—in favor of what is not bourgeois (a thing that they can now do only by substituting the force of reason for the traumatic personal and public reasons to which I alluded; an extremely difficult operation, this, which implies a “clever” self-analysis of themselves outside of every convention).

Notes

1. On March 1, 1968, university students and police clashed in Rome on the avenues of Valle Giulia near the School of Architecture.

2. *Rancio* (rations) and *furteria* (orderly room) are both military terms. Pasolini is referring to the quasi-military national police force or *carabinieri*, who live in barracks.

3. In other words, the mass media of the Western world: the Italian daily

*“Before the letter,” i.e., when peasants were illiterate.—Ed.

newspapers *Il Popolo* and *Il Corriere della Sera*, the American weekly news magazine *Newsweek*, and the French daily newspaper *Le Monde*.

4. Barbiana is a village in the Mugello region of Tuscany, close to Florence. Here Don Lorenzo Milani founded an experimental school at the end of the 1950s, one that challenged the elitist assumptions of the Italian classical education.

5. See "An Article in *Il Giorno*," n. 11, for a discussion of *qualunquismo*.

6. PCI headquarters in Rome.

7. An Italian lawn bowling game.

8. A rhetorical strategy to alienate the audience: see "New Linguistic Questions," n. 17.

9. *Padrone*, translated here as "boss," is a highly charged and politicized word referring to the exploitative class of employers and proprietors.

10. *Uncinzioni* would usually refer to the hanging of animal carcasses from hooks in a slaughterhouse. Here Pasolini is referring to the public display of dead bodies in wartime Italy. The most familiar of such incidents was the stringing up of the bodies of Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacchi, in Milan.

WHAT IS NEO-ZHDANOVISM
AND WHAT ISN'T

When the "message" goes beyond a certain limit of transgression of the "code," it automatically gives birth to NOSTALGIA FOR THE CODE.

One could say that linguistic scandal has the same function as moral or behavioral scandal: both—if carried to extreme forms, creating just such nostalgia instead of distracting the recipient from the code and making him critical where it is concerned—reconfirm his belief in its goodness.

The bourgeois who is scandalized feels himself authorized to make once again, from a virgin perspective, a conformist choice already made.

But while on the level of morality or of behavior an extreme scandal (suicide, sanctity, or, as today, anger) is justified by the fact of associating, assimilating to it, to what it is in and of itself—i.e., "extreme scandal"—and not because of a decision, will, or political awareness (to be black, to be poor, to be Jewish, to be homosexual, etc.), and therefore it is right that the criminal reaction of the bourgeois be nostalgia for the norm and the confirmation of its goodness, this is not valid for an equivalent extreme linguistic scandal. It cannot have the innocence of the FACE of a black, or the SMELL of a poor person, or the BEWILDERMENT of a Jew, or the PROVOCATION of a homosexual; all this, I repeat, can have a sense if lived existentially (in his own body), and it can imply or not a political awareness (and thus become revolutionary not only in nature). Linguistic research (poetic messages) takes place at a cultural and not at an existential level. It is lived in the CONSCIOUSNESS, NOT IN THE BODY.

The scandal which it provokes finds scandalized individuals who are among the privileged. Such a scandal is therefore refused without existential terror, and the consequent NOSTALGIA FOR THE CODE (AND ITS RECONFIRMATION) is cold, partial, ineffective.

To apply on paper (it is necessary to say it) the infractions of the code as they present themselves theoretically to a scholar of "communication theory" is as naive as for a painter to represent atomic energy by filling a canvas with little dots. These mechanics of the infractions of the code, according to the description which a modern linguist makes of it in theory, have been the ridiculous and presumptuous error of the by now distant avant-garde of the early sixties.

Now poetry has really returned to the year zero. On the one hand, all the series of possible mechanical and programmed "infractions" have been exhausted (even if they are, in practical terms, as limitless as the combinations of numbers); on the other, as the consequence of those stupidly extreme infractions, NOSTALGIA FOR THE CODE reigns supreme.

Poetry cannot present itself again—in this year zero—if not by placing itself in a sort of *pansemiological picture* whose living figural integration (corporal, existential) is in action. At least so I believe. Or [so] I deduce from the texts which reappear after the "terror" instituted by the false enemies of the code. It seems to me that I am seeing an extremely reduced aggressiveness of infractions in these texts; the infractions of the code are in fact those of the recent tradition (including—and why not?—some stylemas, and some avant-garde clauses), while a certain existential physical aggressiveness against the moral or behavioral code of society regains strength and life. In short, anger against the linguistic code gives way in the presence of anger against the social code. But this second anger has the personal (physical) characteristics of which I spoke above: the innocence of blackness in and of itself, of poverty in and of itself, etc. If later on there is an implicit political awareness, so much the better; in fact, excellent. But in the meantime, what counts is the transcribed example of one's own life. A life as lived protest, as slow suicide, as strike, or as petit-bourgeois martyrdom. In Italy such characteristics cannot escape a certain provincialism, a certain labored narcissism, a certain poor family kitchen stench. Crepuscularism,¹ literature as a small salvation in a world of horrible greyness, humanism. It is inevitable.

It isn't true that internationalistic myths can redeem from the stale stench of the provinces, of the marginal areas which are "conservative" by definition with respect to the great outline of history. Dario Bellezza is a name on which to bet. A sewer of every degraded pain, a head full of every literary experience. Mantovani and Fa-coetti, two lost sons of the lowest bourgeoisie, whose whimpers are rough-refined. Garriba, who does his best to be an Italian-style wretch with his damned itineraries made of dirty linen. The pan-semiological picture, in which it is a medium of communication—a wild language—the same daily action, the miserable "*dasein*," is a continuous reference of petit-bourgeois, neohumanistic, neosemantic, neointimist, *neoexistential* poems; well localized within the limits of the subcode or literary jargon and which carry out their transgressions of the code impalpably or almost: in wanting to present themselves *as poetry* and therefore *a fortiori** as virgins. No, they do not mention either the blacks of America or those of Africa,

* For a still stronger reason.—Ed.

or the students of San Francisco, or those of Berlin, or the Czechoslovaks, or the Vietnamese. They are not mentioned in them, but they are relived historically and particularistically in Italian cases. Now it just so happens that to mention those names directly in our small country remains a provincial and only apparently live fact; while to relive their life as example, through historical analogy, makes of the new chapter of Italian poetry which perhaps is beginning a chapter of unpleasant reality, but of reality nonetheless.

In short, just as in all these years of reaction to the fifties, effected according to the canons of an insolent triumphal attitude, I have continued, rigid and undaunted, to speak of commitment, so I have remained equally rigid in repeating that the commitment is not of the blackmailing sort wanted by certain official intellectuals or by certain fanatical troops of the PCI.* I am sorry I have to produce my own testimonial, considering the cowardice and ignorance of the new culture (another nice legacy of the avant-garde years); already in the mid-fifties I directed at the PCI criticisms analogous (although infinitely more naive) to those brought today by young people (that is, from the Left): blackmailing "commitment," officialdom, leftist conformity, etc. In short, in the picture of a pansemiology invoked paroxysmally the language of one's action or simply of one's scandalous presence (the FACE of a black) can count as an aspect of pre-revolutionary confrontation; and even better, if everything is registered directly and consciously, if it is "documented" in literature, which is always (when it is good) confrontational by and of itself. Passing from the natural prerevolutionism of those who give scandal (with their life or with their work, and better if with their life through their work) to true and proper revolution is a brief step and depends only on the real external circumstances. The "commitment," that is, the awareness of all this, is the mediation between (natural) confrontation and (conscious) revolution, between absolute ambiguity and relative ambiguity, between enigma and prophecy. *The revolution, then, is made with action*; and so, if anything, the semiotic possibilities of the semiological picture of human communication are to be enlarged to also include, piously, the example of life (Camillo Torres's unwritten ideological work, just to mention one of them).

But why so much awareness of a phenomenon that is as simple as the reflection of one's life in one's work? It is a question of the awareness which is born after a momentary obfuscation, the re-discovery of something forgotten guiltily. But if these notes regarding the avant-garde and the void which followed it (one can never regret the damage caused by four fools, triumphant in the obviousness of a skimpy well-being, of a cynical lack of commitment,

* Acronym for the Italian Communist Party.—Ed.

full of fake alibis, progressives of a self-congratulatory spirit) (and besides, it means that Italian literature, with its servants, particularly of the Left, was ready to suffer these losses; on the contrary, one can say that it wasn't waiting for anything else), if these notes, I say, are presented, apparently, as "restorers of the revolutionary spirit" (which had not been exhausted in any way), let it be clear that in the head of the writer of the same the awareness that a new ZHDANOVISM is being born at the same time is quite lucid.

I don't say that ALL the editors of *Quaderni Piacentini* or of the other journals of the same ilk, which in general have inspired the leaders of the Student Movement—and also of specialized journals like *Ombre Rosse*, for example—I don't say ALL, but some of them, and in particular the groups that rotate around them, are NEO-ZHDANOVISTS.² Obviously they have not noticed the reproduction of the cancer. Objectively it has happened that the criticism of Stalinism, not carried out all the way by the PCI, has become more rigid through the series of hopscotches to the left, creating precisely a sort of neo-Stalinism by absurdity—moralizing by reaction to "revisionism," fanatical by reaction to "tactics," theological by reaction to *qualunquismo*,³ blackmailing by reaction to "opportunism," etc., etc. It is the fascism of the Left, as new phenomenon, typical of the years 1967, 1968, and probably 1969 and following. In a pamphlet one would say: a great number of poorly informed young people, together with a large group of shamefully white-haired older people, after waltzing with the avant-garde, now prepare for a new waltz with the neo-Zhdanovists of a commitment which is neither literature (confrontational, prerevolutionary) nor action (revolutionary).

But it is an oratorical gesture, conformity presented as indignation, a collection of commonplaces—virility, camaraderie, chorus, uproar, moral blackmail, the creation of false tensions and pre-constituted expectations, demogogy, lynching, racism, moralism, inhumanity. The moralistic extremism of the young people—certainly noble if exercised "globally" against the "system"—would therefore seem inevitably to become neo-Stalinism if reabsorbed by the old Communist culture, either in a return to it *or on a level of competition with it*. Everything then falls within the large picture of *industrial puritanism* of which a young person spoke, unheeded, at the psychiatric conference organized by the students of medicine and architecture of Turin. There are certain canons which are universally valid and are followed (unconsciously, and therefore without remedy) by everything; *industrial puritanism* is not just a canon only for those who are integrated into capitalistic systems, but also for the dissenters from these systems, who also live their lives there

and wear out their bodies there. Therefore the Stalinism of which I speak, and, in the literary field, Zhdanovism, find their deep rationale in industrial moralism: in a conception of life in which everyone must have his place, fulfill his function, identify himself with his duty. Hence the Manichaeism, the distinction between those who do this and those who do not do this. And the consequent condemnation of a racist type (the exclusion of the different), a condemnation which unites the integrated and the dissenters within the same, I won't say capitalistic, but *industrial* world. Not for nothing do the integrated and the dissenters have the same type of deafness toward the phenomenon of poetry (they couldn't hope for more than seeing it technicized in avant-garde products, *which say nothing about the existence of their producer*). If, therefore, I hope for myself in the "restoration" of the real revolutionary spirit, extremist and not fanatical, rigorous but not moralistic, I welcome as a positive symptom the representation of a neoexistential poetry *which instead says much about the existence of its authors; necessarily different*, and therefore "a scandal for the integrated, foolishness for the dissenters"; a crack, in any case, in the "industrial puritanism" which unites, let us say, the directors of Fiat and the young extraparliamentary Communists.

(1968)

Notes

1. See "New Linguistic Questions," n. 6, for the term "crepuscularism."
2. *Quaderni Piacentini* and *Ombre Rosse* were Reformist Communist journals of the period.
3. See "An Article in *Il Giorno*," n. 11, for the term *qualunquismo*.

CINEMA

I believe that it is no longer possible to begin to discuss cinema as an expressive language without at least taking into consideration the terminology of semiotics. Quite simply, the problem is this: while 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. Literary languages thus have an immediate legitimacy as instruments (pure and simple instruments), which do, in fact, serve to communicate. Cinematographic communication would instead seem to be arbitrary and aberrant, without the concrete instrumental precedents which are normally used by all. In other words, people communicate with words, not images; therefore, a specific language of images would seem to be a pure and artificial abstraction.

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.

Semiotics confronts sign systems without differentiating among them: it speaks of "systems of *linguistic* signs," for example, because they exist, but this does not exclude at all the theoretical possibility that there may be other systems of signs—for example, systems of *gestural* signs. As a matter of fact, in the real world it is actually necessary to invoke a system of gestural signs to complement the spoken language.

In fact, a word (lin-sign or language sign) spoken with a certain facial expression has one meaning; spoken with another expression it has another meaning, possibly actually its opposite. Let's assume that it is a Neapolitan who is speaking: a word followed by one gesture has one meaning; followed by another gesture, it has another meaning, etc.

This "system of gestural signs" that in actual oral communication is interwoven with and completes the system of linguistic signs can be isolated under laboratory conditions and studied autonomously. One can actually imagine, as an abstract hypothesis, the existence of a single system of gestural signs as the single instrument of human communication (all deaf-mute Neapolitans, in other words).

It is on such a hypothetical system of visual signs that the language of the cinema founds its practical ability to exist, its right to be conceivable as the result of a series of natural communicative archetypes.

This would be very little, certainly. But then it is necessary to add immediately that the 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, which also expresses itself with the pure and simple optical presence of its actions and habits. 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 people who pass by, their gestures, their signs, their actions, their silences, their expressions, their arguments, their collective reactions (groups of people waiting at traffic lights, crowding around a traffic accident or around the fish-woman at Porta Capuana); 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.

But there is more, a theoretician would say: that is, there is an entire world in man which expresses itself primarily through signifying images (shall we invent, by analogy, the term im-signs?): *this is the world of memory and of dreams.*

Every effort to reconstruct a memory is a "sequence of im-signs," that is, in a primordial sense, a film sequence. (Where did I see that person? Wait . . . I think it was at Zagorà—image of Zagorà with its pale green palm trees set off against the pink earth—in the company of Abd el-Kader . . . image of Abd el-Kader and of the "person" as they walk, with the small barracks of the former French outpost in the background, etc.) In this sense every dream is a sequence of im-signs, which have all the characteristics of film sequences: close-ups, long shots, extreme close-ups, etc. In short, there is a complex world of meaningful images—both gestural and environmental—that accompany the lin-signs, and those proper to memories and dreams, which prefigure and offer themselves as the "instrumental" premise of cinematographic communication.

And so it will be immediately necessary to make a parenthetical observation: while the instrumental communication which lies at the basis of poetic or philosophical communication is already extremely elaborate—it is, in other words, a real, historically complex and mature system—the visual communication which is the basis of film language is, on the contrary, extremely crude, almost animal-like. As with gestures and brute reality, so dreams and the processes

of our memory are almost prehuman events, or on the border of what is human. In any case, they are pregrammatical and even premorphological (dreams take place on the level of the unconscious, as do the mnemonic processes; gestures are an indication of an extremely elementary stage of civilization, etc.). *The linguistic instrument on which film is predicated is, therefore, of an irrational type:* and this explains the deeply oneiric quality of the cinema, and also its concreteness as, let us say, object, which is both absolute and impossible to overlook.

More specifically, I am saying that every system of lin-signs is collected and enclosed in a dictionary. Beyond that dictionary there is nothing—with the exception, perhaps, of the gestures which accompany the signs in spoken usage. Each of us thus has in his head a lexically incomplete but practically perfect dictionary of the linguistic signs of his circle and of his country. The work of the writer consists of taking words from this dictionary, where they are kept as if in a shrine, in order to use them in a specific manner: specific in respect to the historical moment of the word and of the writer. The result of this process is to increase the historical value of the word, that is, to increase the meaning of the word.

If that writer should amount to something, in future dictionaries his "specific use of the word" will be cited as an additional meaning of the institutionalized word. The writer's expressive process, that is, his invention, therefore adds to the historicity, that is, to the reality of the language; therefore, he works on the language both as an instrumental linguistic system and as a cultural tradition. His act, if one were to describe it toponymically, is one alone: the reworking of the meaning of the sign. The sign was there, in the dictionary, pigeonholed, ready to be used.

For the filmmaker, however, the action, although fundamentally similar, is much more complicated. There is no dictionary of images. There is no pigeonholed image, ready to be used. If by any chance we wanted to imagine a dictionary of images, we would have to imagine an *infinite dictionary*, as infinite as the dictionary of *possible words*.

The filmmaker does not have a dictionary; he has infinite possibilities. He does not take his signs (im-signs) from a shrine, a protective sheath, or from some baggage, but from chaos, where they are nothing more than possibilities or shadows of a mechanical, oneiric communication. The activity of the cinematographic author, thus toponymically described, is not *single*, but *double*. As a matter of fact, he must (1) 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); (2) fulfill the writer's function, that is, add to such a purely morphological sign its individual expressive quality.

In other words, while the activity of the writer is an aesthetic invention, that of the filmmaker is first linguistic and then aesthetic.

It is true that a kind of dictionary of film, that is, a convention, has established itself during the past fifty years of film. This convention is odd for the following reason: it is stylistic before it is grammatical.

—Let us take the image of the wheels of a train which turn among puffs of steam: it is not a syntagma, it is a stylema. This leads us to suppose that—because cinema obviously will never be able to achieve a real set of grammatical rules, if not, so to speak, those of a stylistic grammar—each time a filmmaker makes a film he is compelled to repeat the *twofold process* mentioned above. And he must be satisfied, insofar as rules are concerned, with a certain number of expressive devices which lack in articulation, and which, born as stylemas, have become syntagmas.

On the positive side of the ledger, the filmmaker, instead of having to refine a centuries-old stylistic tradition, works with one whose history is counted in decades. In practical terms this means that there is no convention to upset by excessive outrage. His "historical addition" to the im-sign is attached to a very short-lived im-sign. Hence, perhaps, a certain sense that film is transitory proceeds from this. Its grammatical signs are the objects of a world which is chronologically exhausted each time it is depicted: the clothes of the thirties, the automobiles of the fifties—these are all "things" without an etymology, or with an etymology that finds its expression in the corresponding word systems.

The evolution that presides over the fashion which creates clothing or which invents the shapes of cars is followed by the meaning of the words—the latter, in other words, adapt themselves to the former. Objects, instead, are impenetrable. They do not move, nor do they say about themselves what they are in a particular moment. The dictionary in which the filmmaker places them in his activity is not sufficient to give them a historical background meaningful for everyone, immediately and at a later date.

Thus it should be observed that the object which becomes a film image is characterized by a degree of unity and determinism. And it is natural that it be so, because the lin-sign used by the writer has already been refined by an entire grammatical, popular, and cultural history, while the im-sign employed by the filmmaker ideally has been extracted—by the filmmaker himself, and no one else—from

the insensitive chaos of objects in a process analogous to the borrowing of images from a dictionary intended for a community able to communicate only through images.

But I must insist: while the images or im-signs are not organized in a dictionary and do not possess a grammar, they nonetheless belong to a common patrimony. All of us, with our eyes, have seen the famous steam engine with its wheels and its pistons. It belongs to our visual memory and to our dreams. If we see it in the real world, "it says something to us." Its apparition in a barren wasteland, for example, *tells us* how touching mankind's industriousness is, and how enormous is the capacity of industrialized society and, therefore, of capitalists to annex the territories of new consumers. At the same time, it *tells* some of us that the train engineer is an exploited man who nevertheless performs his job with dignity for a society which is what it is, even if it is his exploiters who are identified with it. As object the steam engine can tell us all these things as a possible cinematographic symbol in direct communication with us; and indirectly, with others, as a part of the common visual patrimony.

"Brute objects" therefore do not exist in reality. All are sufficiently meaningful in nature to become symbolic signs. It is for this reason that the activity of the filmmaker is legitimate. He chooses a series of objects, or things, or landscapes, or persons as syntagmas (signs of a symbolic language) which, *while they have a grammatical history invented in that moment*—as in a sort of happening dominated by the idea of selection and montage—*do, however, have an already lengthy and intense pregrammatical history.*

In short, much as the pregrammatical qualities of the spoken signs have the right to citizenship in the style of a poet, so the pregrammatical qualities of objects will have the right to citizenship in the style of a filmmaker. This is simply another way of saying what I had already said above: film is fundamentally oneiric because of the elementary nature of its archetypes (which I will list once again: habitual and thus unconscious observation of the environment, gestures, memory, dreams), and because of the fundamental prevalence of the pregrammatical qualities of objects as symbols of the visual language.

One more observation: in 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 (only if one looks thousands of years into the future can one foresee image-

symbols which undergo a process similar to that of words, or at least roots which, originally concrete, through the effects of repeated use have become abstract). For now, therefore, cinema is an artistic and not a philosophic language. It may be a parable, but never a directly conceptual expression. This, then, is a third way of restating the dominant artistic nature of 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."

This is true, but as we shall see, it's a question of a specific and surreptitious prose, because the fundamentally irrational nature of cinema cannot be eliminated. The truth is that cinema, in the very moment in which it established itself as a new "technique" or "genre" of expression, also established itself as a new technique or genre of escapist performance, with a number of consumers unimaginable for all other forms of expression. This means that it immediately underwent a rather foreseeable and unavoidable rape. In other words, all its irrational, oneiric, elementary, and barbaric elements were forced below the level of consciousness; that is, they were exploited as subconscious instruments of shock and persuasion. That narrative convention which has furnished the material for useless and pseudocritical comparisons with the theater and the novel was built on this hypnotic "monstrum"* that a film always is. 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 processes—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 cinema, runs underneath every commercial film which is not unworthy, that is, [which is] fairly adult aesthetically and socially.

(Nevertheless, as we shall see later, art films have also adopted as their specific language this "language of prose," this narrative convention deprived of expressive, impressionistic, and expressionistic highlights, etc.)

It can be stated, however, that the tradition of film language, as it has developed during these first decades, is primarily naturalistic

*Exceptional phenomenon.—Ed.

and objective. This is such an intriguing contradiction that its causes and its deepest technical connotations deserve to be observed carefully.

In fact, to recapitulate synoptically what I have said so far, we 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" (and of only indirect communication with others in that the image that the other person has of a thing of which I speak to him is a reference we have in common). 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.

But the im-signs, as we have seen, also have other archetypes: the amplification of the spoken by gestures and by visually observed reality, with its thousands of signs which function only as signals. Such archetypes are profoundly different from those of memory and dreams. They are, in other words, brutally objective; they belong to a kind of "communication with others" which is as common as possible to everyone and is strictly functional. Thus the tendency that they impress upon the language of the im-signs is rather flatly objective and informative.

Third: the first action which must be performed by the director—that is, the choice of his vocabulary of im-signs as possible usable linguistic entity—certainly does not have the objectivity of an actual, common, established vocabulary such as the one of words. There is thus already a first subjective moment in such a process, too, in that the first choice of images cannot avoid being determined by the filmmaker's ideological and poetic vision of reality at that moment. And so the language of the im-signs is compelled to undergo yet another tendentially subjective coercion.

But this fact, too, is contradicted. The brief stylistic history of cinema, in fact, because of the expressive limitation imposed by the enormous size of the audience of film, has caused the stylemas—which immediately became syntagmas in cinema, and thus were reincorporated into the institution of language—to be very few and, in the final analysis, crude (remember the eternal example of the wheels of the locomotive; the infinite series of always identical close-ups, etc., etc.). All the above stands as a conventional moment in the language of im-signs and guarantees it once again an elementary conventional objectivity.

In short, cinema, or the language of im-signs, has a double nature: it is both extremely subjective and extremely objective (to such an extent that it reaches an unsurpassable and awkward naturalistic fate). The two moments of the above-mentioned nature are closely intertwined and are not separable even in the laboratory.

Literary language is also, naturally, predicated upon a double nature, but its two natures are separable; there is a language of poetry and a language of prose, so completely differentiated from each other that they are, in fact, diachronic—they follow two different histories.

Through words, by performing two different operations, I can create a "poem" or a "tale." Through images, at least until now, I can only make a film (only through its shadings will it tend to be more or less poetic or more or less prosaic—this, in any case, in theory; in practice, as we have seen, a tradition of the "language of narrative film prose" was quickly established).

There are, to be sure, borderline cases in which the poetic quality of the language is foregrounded beyond all reason. For example, Buñuel's *Le chien andalou* is avowedly produced according to canons of pure expressivity.² But, for this reason, it must be labeled surrealist. And it must be said that, as a surrealist product, it is outstanding. Very few other works can compete with it, be they literary or pictorial, because their poetic quality is corrupted and rendered unreal by their content—that is, by the poetics of surrealism, a sort of rather harsh representationalism (through which the words or the colors lose their expressive purity and are enslaved by a monstrous impurity of content). On the other hand, the purity of film images is exalted rather than obfuscated by a surrealist content—because it is the real oneiric nature of dreams and of the unconscious memory which surrealism reactivates in film.

I have already stated that cinema, lacking a conceptual, abstract vocabulary, is powerfully metaphoric; as a matter of fact, *a fortiori** it operates immediately on the metaphoric level. Particular, deliberately generated metaphors, however, always have some quality that is inevitably crude and conventional. Think of the frenzied or joyous flights of doves which are meant to express metaphorically the state of anxiety or joy in the mind of the character. In short, the nuanced, barely perceptible metaphor, the poetic halo one millimeter thick—the one which separates by a whisper and by an abyss the language of "To Sylvia"³ from the institutional Petrarchan/arcadian language—would not seem possible in cinema. Whatever part of the poetically metaphoric which is sensationistically possible in film, it is always in close osmosis with its other nature, the strictly communicative one of prose. The latter, in the end, is the one which has prevailed in the brief tradition of the history of cinema, embracing in a single linguistic convention art films and escapist films, the masterpieces and the serials.

However, the entirety of the most recent film production, from

*For a still stronger reason.—Ed.

Rossellini, elevated to the position of a latter-day Socrates, to the "*nouvelle vague*," to the production of these recent years, of these months (including, I would imagine, the majority of the films of the first Festival of Pesaro), tends toward a "cinema of poetry."⁴

The following question arises: how is the "language of poetry" theoretically explicable and practically possible in cinema?

I would like to answer this question outside a strictly cinematographic context, that is, by breaking this logjam and acting with the freedom which is guaranteed by a special and concrete relationship between cinema and literature. Thus I will temporarily transform the question "is a language of poetry possible in cinema?" into the question "is the technique of free indirect discourse possible in cinema?"

We will see later the reasons for this sudden change in direction. We will see how the birth of a technical tradition of the "language of poetry" in cinema is tied to a particular form of free indirect cinematographic discourse. However, a couple of words are necessary first in order to establish what I mean by "free indirect discourse." It is, simply, the immersion of the filmmaker in the mind of his character and then the adoption on the part of the filmmaker not only of the psychology of his character but also of his language.

Cases of free indirect discourse have always existed in literature. There is a potential and emblematic free indirect discourse even in Dante, when, for mimetic reasons, he uses words which it is unimaginable that he used himself and which belong to the social circle of his characters: expressions of polite language from the illustrated romantic tales of his time for Paolo and Francesca; swear words for the common *Lazarionitum*, etc.⁵

Naturally the use of the "free indirect" exploded first in naturalism (consider the archaizing and poetic naturalism of Verga), and then in crepuscular intimist literature; in other words, the nineteenth century expresses itself very fully through reanimated speech.⁶

The constant characteristic of all reanimated speech is the author's inability to avoid a certain sociological awareness of the environment that he evokes. It is, in fact, the social condition of a character that determines his language (specialized language, slang, dialect, or however dialect-like language has become).

It will also be necessary to make a distinction between interior monologue and free indirect discourse: the interior monologue is speech reanimated by the author for a character who may, at least ideally, be of his generation and share his economic and social class. The language [of the author and of the character] may therefore well be identical. The psychological and objective individuation of the

character is not a question of language but of style. "Free indirect discourse is more naturalistic in that it is an actual direct discourse without quotation marks and thus implies the use of the language of the character."

In middle-class literature, which is lacking in class consciousness (that is, it identifies itself with the whole of humanity), "free indirect" discourse is oftentimes a pretext: the author constructs a character, who may speak an invented language, in order to express a particular interpretation of the world. It is in this "indirect" discourse, whose function is a pretext—at times for good reasons, at others for bad—that one can find a narrative in which large amounts of the text are taken from the "language of poetry."

In cinema direct discourse corresponds to the point-of-view shot. In direct discourse the author stands aside and cedes speech to his character, putting what he says in quotation marks: "And now the poet was climbing before me and saying: 'Come on now: the meridian is touched by the sun, and on the shore night now sets its foot on Morocco.'" ⁷ Through direct discourse Dante reports the words of the gentle teacher, exactly as they were spoken. When a screenwriter uses the expressions "*As seen* by Accattone, Stella walks through a small, filthy field," or "Close-up of Cabiria who looks and sees . . . down there, among the acacias, some boys advance toward her playing instruments and dancing," he is sketching the outline of those shots which, as the film is shot, and to a greater extent edited, will become *point-of-view shots*. ⁸ There is no lack of famous point-of-view shots, perhaps because of their extravagance. Think back to the shot seen from the point of view of the cadaver who sees all the world as it might be seen by someone who is lying inside a coffin, that is, from the bottom up and in motion.

Much as writers do not always have a precise technical awareness of a process such as free indirect discourse, so directors, too, have until now established the stylistic premises for such a process either with the most absolute lack of awareness or with a very relative awareness. That nevertheless a free indirect discourse may also be possible for cinema is certain. Let us call this process a "free indirect point-of-view shot" (which, when compared to the analogous process in literature, can be infinitely less articulated and complex). And, seeing that we have established a difference between "free indirect" and "interior monologue," it will be necessary to see to which of the two processes the "free indirect point of view" is closer.

In the first place, it cannot be an actual "interior monologue," since cinema does not have the possibilities of interiorization and abstraction that the word has. It is an "interior monologue" of images, that's all. In other words, it lacks the entire abstract and

theoretical dimension which is explicitly involved in the evocative and cognitive act of the character's monologue. Thus the absence of one element—the one which in literature is constituted by thoughts expressed by abstract or conceptual words—means that a "free indirect point-of-view shot" will never correspond perfectly to the interior monologue in literature.

Moreover, in the history of cinema, I would not be able to cite any cases of the total disappearance of the filmmaker into a character—at least until the early sixties. In other words, I don't think a film exists which is entirely a "free indirect point-of-view shot" in that the entire story is told through the character, through an absolute internalization of his inner system of allusions.

While the "free indirect point-of-view shot" does not correspond entirely to the "interior monologue," it corresponds still less to actual "free indirect discourse."

When a writer recreates the speech of one of his characters, he immerses himself in his psychology, but also in his *language*. Free indirect discourse is therefore always linguistically differentiated when compared to the language of the writer. The writer has the possibility of reproducing the various languages of the different types of social conditions by reanimating them because they exist. Every linguistic reality is a totality of socially differentiated and differentiating languages, and the writer who uses "free indirect discourse" must be aware of this above all—an awareness which in the final analysis is a form of class consciousness.

But the reality of the possible "institutional film language," as we have seen, does not exist, or is infinite, and the author must cut out his vocabulary from this infinity every time. But also, in such a vocabulary, the language is of necessity interdialectal and international, because our eyes are the same the world over. They cannot take into consideration, because they don't exist, special languages, sublanguages, slang—in short, social differences. Or if they do exist, as in fact they do, they are totally beyond any possibility of classification and use.

Because, in fact, the "gaze" of a peasant, perhaps even of an entire town or region in prehistoric conditions of underdevelopment, embraces another type of reality than the gaze given to that same reality by an educated bourgeois. Not only do the two actually see different sets of things, but even a single thing in itself appears different through the two different "gazes." However, all this cannot be institutionalized; it is purely inductive. In practice, therefore, on a possible common linguistic level predicated on "gazes" at things, the difference that a director can perceive between himself and a character is only psychological and social. *But not linguistic*. He therefore finds himself in the complete impossibility of effecting

any naturalistic *mimesis* of this language, of this hypothetical "gaze" at reality by others.

Thus, if he immerses himself in his character and tells the story or depicts the world through him, he cannot make use of that formidable natural instrument of differentiation that is language. *His activity cannot be linguistic; it must, instead, be stylistic.*

Moreover, a writer, too, if he were hypothetically to reanimate the speech of a character socially *identical to himself*, can differentiate his psychology from that of his character not by means of a language which is his own language, but by means of a style—that is, in practical terms, through certain characteristic traits of the "language of poetry." Thus the fundamental characteristic of the "free indirect point-of-view shot" is not linguistic but stylistic. And it can therefore be defined as an interior monologue lacking both the explicit conceptual element and the explicit abstract philosophical element. This, at least in theory, causes the "free indirect point-of-view shot" in cinema to imply the possibility of an extreme stylistic articulation. In fact, it causes it to free the expressive possibilities compressed by the traditional narrative convention through a sort of return to the origins until the original oneiric, barbaric, irregular, aggressive, visionary quality of cinema is found through its technical devices. In short, it is the "free indirect point-of-view shot" which establishes a possible tradition of the "technical language of poetry" in cinema.

As concrete examples of all this, I will drag into my laboratory Antonioni, Bertolucci, and Godard—but I could also add Rocha from Brazil, or Forman from Czechoslovakia, and naturally many others (presumably, almost all the filmmakers of the Festival of Pesaro).⁹

As for Antonioni (*The Red Desert*), I don't want to linger on those aspects of the film which are universally recognized as "poetic," which are certainly numerous in his film.¹⁰ For example, those two or three out-of-focus violet flowers in the foreground in the shot in which the two protagonists enter the house of the neurotic worker; and those same two or three violet flowers which reappear in the background, no longer out of focus, but aggressively in focus, in the shot of the exit. Or, consider the sequence of the dream, which, after so much delicacy of color, is suddenly conceived in an almost blatant technicolor (in order to imitate, or better, to reanimate through a "free indirect point-of-view shot" the comic-book idea that a child has of tropical beaches). Or, consider also the sequence of the preparation for the trip to Patagonia, the workers who listen, etc.—that stupendous close-up of a distressingly "real" Emilian worker, followed by an insane pan from the bottom up along an electric blue stripe on the whitewashed wall of the warehouse. All

this testifies to a deep, mysterious, and—at times—great intensity in the formal idea that excites the fantasy of Antonioni.

But, to demonstrate that it is this formalism which is, in essence, the premise of the film, I would like to examine two aspects of an extremely meaningful stylistic operation (the same one which I will also examine in Bertolucci and Godard). The two parts of the process are the following: (1) the sequential juxtaposition of two insignificantly different points of view of the same image; that is, the sequence of two shots which frame the same piece of reality, first from nearby, then from *a bit* further; or, first frontally and then *a bit* more obliquely; or, finally, actually on the same axis but with two different lenses. This leads to an insistence that becomes obsessive, as it becomes the myth of the actual, distressing, autonomous beauty of things. (2) The technique of making the characters enter and leave the frame, as a result of which, in an occasionally obsessive manner, the editing comes to consist of a series of "pictures"—which we can call informal—where the characters enter, say or do something, and then go out, leaving the picture once again to its pure, absolute significance as picture. This picture is followed by another analogous picture, where the characters enter, etc. So that the world is presented as if regulated by a myth of pure pictorial beauty that the personages invade, it is true, but adapting themselves to the rules of that beauty instead of profaning them with their presence.

Film's internal law of "obsessive framing" thus clearly demonstrates the prevalence of formalism as a finally liberated and therefore poetic myth. (My use of the word formalism does not imply a value judgment. I know very well that there is an authentic, sincere formalistic inspiration: the poetry of language.)

But how has this liberation been possible for Antonioni? Very simply, it has become possible by creating the "stylistic condition" for a "free indirect point-of-view shot" that coincides with the entire film.

In *Red Desert* Antonioni no longer superimposes his own formalistic vision of the world on a generally committed content (the problem of neuroses caused by alienation), as he had done in his earlier films in a somewhat clumsy blending. Instead, he looks at the world by immersing himself in his neurotic protagonist, reanimating the facts through her eyes (she, not by accident, clearly needs professional care, having already tried to commit suicide). 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. And if there were something arbitrary in such a substitution, there could be no objections. 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, a freedom which approaches—and for this it is intoxicating—the arbitrary.

The obsessive immobility of the frame is also typical of Bertolucci's film *Before the Revolution*.¹¹ However, it has a different meaning than it does for Antonioni. It is not a fragment of the world, enclosed in a frame and transformed by the frame into a piece of self-sufficient figurative beauty, that interests Bertolucci as instead it interests Antonioni. The formalism of Bertolucci is infinitely less pictorial, and his framing does not act metaphorically on reality, subdividing it into so many pieces which are as mysteriously autonomous as paintings. Bertolucci's frame adheres to reality according to a standard that is somewhat realistic (according to a technique of poetic language followed, as we shall see, by the classics, from Charlot to Bergman). The immobility of the frame of a piece of reality (the river Parma, the streets of Parma, etc.) testifies to the elegance of a deep and uncertain love, precisely for that piece of reality.

In practical terms, the entire stylistic system of *Before the Revolution* is a long "free indirect point-of-view shot," predicated on the dominant state of mind of the protagonist of the film, the young neurotic aunt. But while in Antonioni we find the wholesale substitution of the filmmaker's vision of feverish formalism for the view of the neurotic woman, in Bertolucci such a wholesale substitution has not taken place. Rather, we have a mutual contamination¹² of the worldviews of the neurotic woman and of the author. These views, being inevitably similar, are not readily distinguishable—they shade into each other; they require the same style.

The only expressively sharp moments of the film are, precisely, the "insistent pauses" of the framing and of the rhythms of the editing. The programmatic realism of these devices (the Rossellian neorealistic heritage, and the mythic realism of some younger masters) is charged during the abnormal duration of a shot or of an editing rhythm until it explodes in a sort of technical scandal. This insistence on particulars, especially on certain details of the digressions, is a deviation in relation to the method of the film: it is the temptation to make another film. It is, in short, the presence of the author, who transcends his film in an abnormal freedom and who constantly threatens to abandon it, detoured by a sudden inspiration which is, finally, the latent inspiration of the love for the poetic world of his own vital experiences. A moment of barefaced subject-

tivity, natural in a film in which the subjectivity is completely mystified through that process of false objectivism that is the result of a pretextual "free indirect point-of-view shot." In short, beneath the technique produced by the protagonist's state of mind—which is disoriented, incapable of coordination, obsessed by details, attracted by compulsory kindness—the world as it is seen by the no less neurotic filmmaker continually surfaces, dominated by an elegant, elegiac spirit, which never becomes classicist.

There is, instead, a somewhat brutal and even slightly vulgar quality in Godard's cultural formation. The elegy is inconceivable to him because, being a Parisian, he cannot be touched by such a provincial, rustic sentiment. Nor can he conceive of Antonioni's formal classicism, for the same reason. He is completely post-impressionistic. He retains nothing of the old sensuality which stagnates in the conservative, marginal area between the Po and Rome, even when it has become very Europeanized, as it has in Antonioni. Godard has not accepted any moral imperative. He feels neither the obligations of Marxist commitment (old stuff), nor the bad faith of academia (provincial stuff). His vitality is without restraints, modesty, or scruples. It reconstitutes the world within itself. It is also cynical toward itself. The poetics of Godard is ontological—it is called cinema. His formalism is thus a technicality which is intrinsically poetic: everything that is captured in movement by a camera is beautiful. It is the technical, and therefore poetic, restoration of reality.

Naturally, Godard also plays the usual game; he too needs a "dominant condition" of the protagonist to guarantee his technical freedom, a neurotic and scandalous dominant condition in the relationship with reality. Thus, Godard's protagonists are also sick; they are exquisite flowers of the bourgeoisie, but they are not under medical treatment. They are extremely ill, but vital; they have not yet passed over the threshold into a pathological condition. They simply represent the average of a new anthropological type. Obsession also characterizes their relationship with the world: the obsessive attachment to a detail or a gesture (and here cinematographic technique, which can intensify situations even better than literary technique, comes into play). But in Godard we are not confronted by an insistence on a given individual object which exceeds all bearable limits. In him there is neither the cult of the object as form (as in Antonioni), nor the cult of the object as symbol of a lost world (as in Bertolucci). Godard has no cult, and he puts everything on the same level, head on. His pretextual "free indirect discourse" is a confrontational arrangement which does not differentiate between the thousand details of the world, without a break in continuity, edited with the cold and almost self-satisfied

obsession (typical of his amoral protagonist) of a disintegration reconstituted into unity through that inarticulate language. Godard is completely devoid of classicism; otherwise, one could speak of neocubism in reference to him. But we would speak of an atonal neocubism. Beneath the events of his film, under the long "free indirect point-of-view shots" which imitate the state of mind of his protagonists, there is always a film made for the pure pleasure of restoring a reality fragmented by technique and reconstituted by a brutal, mechanical, and discordant Braque.

The "cinema of poetry"—as it appears a few years after its birth—thus has the common characteristic of producing films with a double nature. The film that is seen and ordinarily perceived is a "free indirect point-of-view shot." It may be irregular and approximate—very free, in short, given that the filmmaker makes use of the "dominant psychological state of mind in the film," which is that of a sick, abnormal protagonist, in order to make it a continual *mimesis* which allows him great, anomalous, and provocative stylistic freedom.

Beneath this film runs another film, the one that the filmmaker would have made even without the pretext of the *visual mimesis* of his protagonist—a film whose character is completely and freely expressive/expressionistic.

Proof of the presence of such an unrealized, subterranean film are, precisely, as we have seen in the specific analyses, the obsessive shots and editing rhythms. This obsessiveness contradicts not only the norm of the common film language, but the very internal organization of the film as a "free indirect point-of-view shot." It is, in other words, the moment in which language, following a different and possibly more authentic inspiration, frees itself of function and presents itself as "language as such"—style.

The "cinema of poetry" is in reality, therefore, profoundly based, for the most part, on the practice of style as sincerely poetic inspiration, to such an extent as to remove all suspicion of mystification from the pretextual use of the "free indirect point-of-view shot."

What does all this mean? It means that a common technical/stylistic tradition is taking form; a language, that is, of the cinema of poetry. This language by now tends to be placed diachronically in relation to the language of film narrative, a diachronism that would appear destined to be always more pronounced, as happens in literary systems. This emerging technical/stylistic tradition is based on the totality of those film stylemas that developed almost naturally as a function of the anomalous psychological excesses of the pretextually chosen protagonists; or better, as a function of a substantially formalistic vision of the world (informal in Antonioni, elegiac in

Bertolucci, technical in Godard, etc.). To express this internal vision necessarily requires a special language with its own stylemas and its own techniques equally present alongside the inspiration. This inspiration, precisely because it is formalistic, finds both its instrument and its object in its stylemas and techniques.

The series of "film stylemas" thus born and catalogued in a scarcely established tradition (still without norms other than those which are intuitive and, I would say, pragmatic) all coincide with the typical processes of specifically cinematographic expression. They are pure linguistic facts, and therefore they require specific linguistic expressions. To list them implies tracing a possible and not yet codified "prosody," whose normativity, however, is already potential (from Paris to Rome, from Prague to Brasilia).

The first characteristic of these signs which constitute a tradition of the cinema of poetry consists of that phenomenon that is normally and banally defined by persons in the business as "allowing the camera to be felt." In short, the great principle of wise filmmakers, in force up to the first years of the sixties ("Do not allow the camera to be felt!"), has been replaced by the opposite principle. These two canons, gnoseological and gnomic opposites, are there to define unequivocally the presence of two different ways of making films, of two different film languages.

But then it must be said, in the great film poems—from Charlot to Mizoguchi to Bergman—the general and common characteristic was that "the camera was not felt."¹³ They were not, in other words, shot according to the canons of the "language of poetry." Their poetry was elsewhere than in language as technique of language. The fact that the camera wasn't felt meant that the language adhered to the meanings, putting itself at their service. It was transparent to perfection; it did not superimpose itself on facts, violating them through the insane semantic deformations that are attributable to its presence as continuous technical/stylistic awareness.

Let us recall the boxing sequence in *City Lights* [1931] between Chaplin and a champion who, characteristically, is much stronger than he. The stupendous comical nature of Chaplin's ballet, those symmetrical, useless steps taken first here and then there, is heart-rending and irresistibly ridiculous. Well, the camera was there, motionless, filming whatever "totality" was in front of it. It wasn't felt. Or, let us recall one of the latest products of the classical "cinema of poetry." In Bergman's *The Devil's Eye* [1960], when Don Giovanni and Pablo leave after three hundred years, and see the world once again, the apparition of the world—something so extraordinary—is presented by Bergman as a "long shot" of the two protagonists in a somewhat wild stretch of springtime country landscape, one or two extremely ordinary "close-ups," and a great "establishing shot" of a

Swedish panorama of disturbing beauty in its transparent and humble insignificance. The camera was still; it framed those images in an absolutely normal manner. It was not felt.

The poetic nature of classical films was thus not obtained using a specifically poetic language. This means that they were not poems, but stories. Classical cinema was and is narrative. Its language is that of prose. Poetry is internal to it, as, for example, in the tales of Chekhov or Melville. Conversely, the creation of a "language of film poetry" thus implies the possibility of making pseudostories written with the language of poetry. The possibility, in short, of an art prose, of a series of lyrical pages whose subjectivity is ensured by the pretextual use of the "free indirect point-of-view shot," and whose real protagonist is style.

The camera is therefore felt for good reasons. The alternation of different lenses, a 25mm and a 200 mm on the same face; the proliferation of wasted zoom shots, with their lenses of very high numbers which are on top of things, expanding them like excessively leavened bread; the continuous, deceptively casual shots against the light, which dazzle the camera; the hand-held camera movements; the more sharply focused tracking shots; the wrong editing for expressive reasons; the irritating opening shots; the interminable pauses on the same image, etc.—this entire technical code came into being almost out of impatience with the rules, out of a need for an irregular and provocative freedom, out of an otherwise authentic or delicious enjoyment of anarchy. But then it quickly became the canon, the linguistic and prosodic patrimony that interests contemporary filmmaking the world over.

Of what use is it to have singled out and, in some way, to have baptized this recent technical/stylistic tradition of a "cinema of poetry"? Obviously, it simply offers a useful terminology which is meaningless unless one proceeds subsequently to a comparative examination of this phenomenon in a vaster cultural, social, and political context.

Film, probably since 1936, the year *Modern Times* appeared, has always anticipated literature, or at least has catalyzed, with a timeliness that made it be first chronologically, the deep sociopolitical themes that would characterize literature soon thereafter. For this reason cinematographic neorealism (*Rome, Open City* [1945]) prefigured all the Italian literary neorealism of the postwar years and of part of the fifties; the neodecadent and neoformalist films of Fellini or Antonioni prefigured the Italian neo-avant-garde revival or the fading of neorealism; the "new wave" anticipated the "école du regard,"¹⁴ making its first symptoms sensationally public; the new cinema of some of the socialist republics is the first and most sensational evidence of a general awakening in those countries of

interest in the formalism of Western origin, as manifestation of the resumption of an interrupted twentieth-century theme, etc.

In short, in general terms, the formation of a tradition of a "language of poetry of film" may be posited as revealing a strong general renewal of formalism as the average, typical production of the cultural development of neocapitalism. (Naturally, there is my reservation, due to my Marxist morality, that there is a possible alternative: that is, of a renewal of the writer's mandate, which at this time appears to have expired.)

And so, in conclusion: (1) The technical/stylistic tradition of a cinema of poetry is born within the bounds of neoformalistic research, which corresponds to the tangible and prevalently linguistic/stylistic inspiration that is once again current in literary production. (2) The use of the "free indirect point-of-view shot" in the cinema of poetry, as I have repeated several times, is pretextual. It serves to speak indirectly—through any narrative alibi—in the first person singular. Therefore, 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. Therefore, to express themselves they must make recourse to the most sensational expressive devices of the "language of poetry." (3) The pretextual characters cannot be chosen from outside the cultural limits of the filmmaker; that is, they are analogous to him in culture, language, and psychology—they are exquisite "flowers of the bourgeoisie." If they should belong to another social world, they are mythicized and assimilated by being categorized as abnormal, neurotic, or hypersensitive, etc. In short, the bourgeoisie, also in film, identifies itself with all of humanity, in an irrational interclassicism.

All of this is part of that general attempt on the part of bourgeois culture to recover the ground lost in the battle with Marxism and its possible revolution. And it insinuates itself into that in some ways grandiose movement of what we might call the anthropological evolution of capitalism; that is, the neocapitalism that discusses and modifies its own structures and that, in the case in point, once again, ascribes to poets a late humanistic function: the myth and the technical consciousness of form.

(1965)

Notes

1. An im-sign or image-sign, for Pasolini, is the film equivalent of a lin-sign or language-sign.
2. This surrealist film was made by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí in 1928.

3. Ode written by Giuseppe Parini (1729-1799).
4. The *nouvelle vague*, or New Wave, refers to a core group of innovative French filmmakers who began as film critics for the journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* in the 1950s and is often expanded to include other young and innovative French directors of the sixties. The First Festival of Pesaro, held in September 1965, was devoted to new cinema. Pasolini read "The 'Cinema of Poetry'" to this audience, which included Roland Barthes.
5. *Inferno* 5: 73-142; see "An Article in *Il Giorno*," n. 3, for *Lazarionum*. Pasolini discusses Dante's use of free indirect discourse in detail in "Dante's Will to Be a Poet," pp. 102-112, and in "The Bad Mimesis," pp. 113-20.
6. See "New Linguistic Questions," n. 6, for the term "crepuscularism"; see *ibid.*, n. 13, for a discussion of the verb *rivivere*.
7. Dante, *Purgatorio*, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton, 1973), 4: 136-39.
8. Pasolini wrote the screenplay for *Accattone* (1962), which he also directed, and collaborated on the screenplay of *Nights of Cabiria* (1957).
9. Pasolini's intention is to refer to the innovative filmmakers of the mid-sixties.
10. *Il deserto rosso* (*The Red Desert*, 1964) was Antonioni's most recent film at the time Pasolini was writing, and it is generally considered to be one of his best, a visually striking portrait of alienation in the environment of modern technology.
11. *Prima della rivoluzione* (*Before the Revolution*, 1964) is an early autobiographical film in which the young director finds his style, a lyrical vision that mixes Marxism and Freudianism.
12. See Introduction, pp. xviii-xix, for a discussion of the linguistic meaning of "contaminate."
13. Pasolini selects these three as internationally known auteur filmmakers who represent different cultures but are all creators of "film poems."
14. The French new novel of the sixties, whose chief practitioners were Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, and Nathalie Sarraute.

THE SCREENPLAY AS A "STRUCTURE THAT WANTS
TO BE ANOTHER STRUCTURE"

The concrete element in the relationship between film and literature is the screenplay. I am not concerned, however, with observing the mediating function of the screenplay and the critical elaboration of the literary work which it undertakes, "figuratively integrating it" with the equally critical perspective of the cinematographic work which it presupposes.

In this note, what interests me about the screenplay is the moment in which it *can be considered an autonomous "technique," a work complete and finished in itself*. Let us consider the case of a writer's script which is not taken from a novel or—for one reason or another—translated into a film.

This case offers us an autonomous script that can represent an actual choice of the author very well: the choice of a narrative technique.

What is the standard of evaluation for such a work? If one considers it to belong completely to "writing"—that is, nothing more than the product of a "type of writing" whose fundamental element is that of writing through the technique of the screenplay—then it must be judged in the usual way in which literary products are judged, and precisely as a new literary "genre," with its particular prosody and its own metrics, etc., etc.

But in so doing, one would perform an erroneous and arbitrary critical operation. If there isn't the *continuous allusion to a developing cinematographic work*, it is no longer a technique, and its appearance as screenplay is purely a pretext (a situation which has yet to occur). If, therefore, an author decides to adopt the "technique" of the screenplay as autonomous work, he must accept at the same time the allusion to a "potential" cinematographic work, without which the technique he had adopted is fictitious—and thus falls directly into the traditional forms of literary writings.

If instead he accepts the allusion to a "potential" visualizable cinematographic work as substantive element, as structure of his "work in the form of a screenplay," then it can be said that his work is both typical (it has aspects that are truly similar to all actual, functional screenplays) and autonomous at the same time.

Such a moment exists in all screenplays (of high quality films): that is, all screenplays have a moment in which they are auto-

mous "techniques," whose primary structural element is the integrating reference to a potential cinematographic work.

In this sense a critique of a screenplay as an autonomous technique will obviously require particular conditions so complex, so predetermined by an ideological tangle which has no connections either with traditional literary criticism or with the recent tradition of film criticism, that it will actually require the assistance of potential new codes.

For example, is it possible to employ the code of stylistic criticism in the analysis of a "screenplay"? It may be that it is possible, but by subjecting it to a series of requirements that that code had not clearly foreseen to such a degree that it can only pretend to cover them. In fact, if the histological examination of a sample taken from the body of a screenplay is analogous to what is performed upon a literary work, it deprives the screenplay of its character, which, as we have seen, is substantive: the allusion to a potential cinematographic work. The stylistic examination has under its eyes the form that it has: it also extends a diagnostic veil over what it could know in advance, not to mention over what it does not really know, not only as knowledge, but as a working hypothesis!

The observation on the infinitesimal detail that reproduces the whole—which leads to a historicocultural redefinition of the work—will always lack something in the case of the screenplay; that is, an internal element of form, an element that is not there, that is a "desire for form."

(Once having become aware of the problem, it is probable that a stylist can adapt his investigation to it; however, the essential characteristic of stylistic criticism, that of working on concrete material, is avoided: in practical terms one can't "perceive" this "desire for form" from a detail of the form. This desire must be ideologically presupposed; it must be part of the critical code. In the details it is only a void, a dynamic that is not made concrete; it is like a fragment of strength without a destination, which is translated into a coarseness and incompleteness of form, from which the stylist can only deduce a coarseness and incompleteness of the entire work: and perhaps deduce its quality as sketch, as potential work, etc., etc. And in so doing he has not focused on the correct critical point, which must instead foresee and presume such a conclusion as an integrating part of the work, as its structural characteristic, etc., etc.)

The foremost characteristic of the "sign" of the technique of the screenplay is that of alluding to meaning through two different paths, [which are] simultaneous and converging. That is: the sign of the screenplay refers to the meaning according to the normal path of all written languages, and in particular of literary jargons, but, at the

same time, it hints at that same meaning, forwarding the addressee to another sign, that of the potential film. Each time our brain, confronted by a sign of the screenplay, simultaneously travels these two paths—one rapid and normal, and the other long and special—in order to understand its meaning.

In other words: the author of a screenplay asks his addressee for a particular collaboration: namely, that of lending to the text a "visual" completeness which it does not have, but at which it hints. The reader is an accomplice immediately—in the presence of the immediately intuited characteristics of the screenplay in the operation which is requested of him—and his representational imagination enters into a creative phase mechanically much higher and more intense than when he reads a novel.

The technique of screenwriting is predicated above all on this collaboration of the reader: and it is understood that its perfection consists in fulfilling this function [of collaboration] perfectly. Its form, its style, are perfect and complete when they have included and integrated these necessities into themselves. The impression of coarseness and of incompleteness is thus apparent. This coarseness and this incompleteness are stylistic elements.

At this point a conflict takes place among the various aspects under which a "sign" is presented. The sign is at the same time oral (phoneme), written (grapheme), and visual (kineme). Through an incalculable series of conditioned reflexes of our mysterious cybernetics, we always have simultaneously present these different aspects of the linguistic "sign," which is therefore one and three. If we belong to the class which holds culture captive, and therefore we at least know how to read, the "graphemes" appear immediately to us simply as "signs," infinitely enriched by the simultaneous presence of their "phonemes" and their "kinemes."

There are certain "writings" already in the tradition which require of the reader an operation similar to the one which we have described above: for example, the writings of symbolist poetry. When we read a poem by Mallarmé or by Ungaretti, in the presence of the "graphemes" that are at that moment in front of our eyes—the *lin-signs*—we do not limit ourselves to a pure and simple reading; the text requires us to cooperate by "pretending" to hear those graphemes acoustically. In other words, it sends us back to the phonemes, which are simultaneously present in our mind even if we are not reading aloud. A verse of Mallarmé or of Ungaretti attains its meaning only through a semantic expansion, or an exquisite barbaric coercion of the individual meanings which is obtained through the supposed musicality of the word or of the nexus of the words. That is, giving denotations *not through a particular expressivity of the sign but through a prevarication of its phoneme*. While we read, we

thus integrate in this manner the aberrant meaning of the special vocabulary of the poet, following two paths, the normal *sign-meaning* and the abnormal *sign-sign-as-phoneme-meaning*.

The same thing occurs in screenplay-texts (let's go ahead and invent this new expression!). Here, too, the reader integrates the incomplete meaning of the writing of the screenplay, following two paths, the normal *sign-meaning*, and the abnormal *sign-sign-as-kineme-meaning*.

The word of the screenplay-text is thus characterized by the expressive accentuation of one of the three moments through which it is constituted, the kineme.

Naturally the "kinemes" are primordial images, visual monads [which are] nonexistent in reality, or virtually so. The image is born of the coordinations of the kinemes.

This is the point: this coordination of "kinemes" is not a literary technique. It is another *langue*, predicated on a system of "kinemes" or of "im-signs,"¹ on which the film metalanguage is established by analogy to written or spoken metalanguages. [The film meta-language] has always been discussed (at least in Italy) as a "language" analogous to the written-spoken one (literature, theater, etc.), and the visual component is also seen by analogy to the figurative arts. Any study of film is therefore vitiated by this genesis in a linguistic model which film has in the mind of whoever analyzes or studies it. The "film element"—a definition that has had only a superficial acceptance in Italy—is not capable of hypothesizing the possibilities of film as *another language*, with its own autonomous and particular structures: the "film element" tends to postulate film as another specific technique, predicated by analogy on the written-spoken language, that is, on what is for us language as such (but not for semiotics, which is indifferent in the presence of the most varied, scandalous, and hypothetical sign-systems).

Therefore, while the "kineme" in written-spoken languages is one of the elements of the sign—and, above all, the one least taken into consideration, given that we are used to perceiving the word as written-spoken, that is, above all, as phoneme and grapheme—in film languages the kineme is the sign *par excellence*: one must instead speak of the im-sign (that is, accordingly, the "kineme," which, separated from the other two aspects of the word, has become an autonomous, self-sufficient sign).

What is this fundamental visual monad which we define as the im-sign, and what are the "coordinations of im-signs" from which the image is born? Here, too, we have always reasoned instinctively, keeping in mind a sort of literary model—that is, making a continuous and unconscious analogy between film and expressive written languages. We have, that is, identified the im-sign with the word by

analogy, and we have built upon this premise a sort of surreptitious grammar, vaguely, accidentally, and in some way sensuously analogous to that of written-spoken languages. In other words, we have in mind a very vague idea of the im-sign that we generally identify with the word. But the word is a noun, a verb, an interjection, or an interrogative. There are languages in which nouns predominate, others in which verbs predominate. In our common Western languages language consists of a balance of definitions (substantives) and of actions (verbs), etc., etc. What are nouns, verbs, conjunctions, interjections in cinematographic language? And, above all, is it necessary that *they exist* in obedience to our law of analogy and custom? If cinema is *another language*, cannot this unknown language be predicated on laws that have nothing to do with the linguistic laws to which we have become accustomed?

What is the im-sign physically? A frame? A given number of frames? A pluricellular length of frames? A meaningful sequence of frames that has a certain duration? This still remains to be decided. And it will not be until we have the data to write a grammar of cinema. To say, for example, that the im-sign or the monad of cinematographic language is a "syntaxeme," that is, a coordinated whole of frames, is still arbitrary. In the same way it is arbitrary to say, for example, that cinema is a totally "verbal" language; that is, that in cinema there are no nouns, conjunctions, interjections, unless they are one with verbs. And that therefore the nucleus of film, the im-sign, is a group of images in movement, whose duration is indeterminable, shapeless, and magmatic. A "magmatic" grammar by definition, therefore, to be described through unusual paragraphs and chapters in the written-spoken grammars.

What is not arbitrary is to say instead that cinema is predicated on a "system of signs" which is different from the written-spoken one; that is, that cinema is another language.

But it is not another language in the sense that Bantu is different from Italian, for example—to juxtapose two languages which are placed in juxtaposition only with difficulty. And this does make sense, if *the translation also* implies an operation analogous to what we have seen for the screenplay-text (and for certain forms of writing such as symbolist poetry): it requires, in other words, a special collaboration on the part of the reader, and its signs have two channels of reference to the meaning. It has to do with the moment of literal translation with the text on the facing page. If on one page we see the Bantu text and on the other the Italian text, the signs of the Italian text that we perceive execute that double carom that only extremely refined thinking machines such as our brains can follow. In other words, they convey the meaning *directly* (the sign "palm tree" that indicates the palm tree) and *indirectly*, sending us back to

the Bantu sign that indicates the same palm tree in a different psychophysical or cultural world. The reader, naturally, does not understand the Bantu sign, which for him is a dead letter; however, he perceives at least that the meaning conveyed by the sign "palm tree" must be integrated, modified. . . . How? Perhaps without knowing how, by that mysterious Bantu sign. In any case, the feeling that it must be modified in some way does modify it. The operation of collaboration between the translator and the reader is thus double: *sign-meaning, and sign-sign of another (primitive) language-meaning.*

The example of a primitive language approximates what we want to say about film: that primitive language in fact also has structures immensely different from ours, belonging, let us suppose, to the world of "untamed thought." However, the "untamed thought" is in us, and there is a fundamentally identical structure in our languages and in primitive ones: both are constituted of lin-signs and are therefore reciprocally compatible. The two respective grammars have analogous designs. (So while we are used to suspending our grammatical habits because of the structures of another language, even the most compromising and difficult, we are not instead capable of suspending our cinematographic habits. This situation will not change until a scientific grammar of cinema is written, as a potential grammar of a "system of im-signs" on which film is based.)

Now, we were saying that the "sign" of the screenplay follows a double road (*sign-meaning; sign-film-sign-meaning*). It is essential to repeat that the sign of literary metalanguages also follows the same path, bringing forth images in the collaborating mind of the reader: the grapheme now accentuates its own being as phoneme, now its being as kineme, according to the musical or pictorial quality of the writing. But we have said that in the case of the screenplay-text the characteristic technique is a special and canonical request for collaboration from the reader *to see the kineme in the grapheme, above all, and thus to think in images, reconstructing in his own head the film to which the screenplay alludes as a potential work.*

We must now complete this initial observation, pointing out that the kineme thus accentuated and functionalized, as we were saying, is not a mere, albeit dilated, element of the sign, but is the sign of another linguistic system. The sign of the screenplay therefore not only expresses "*a will of the form to become another*" *above and beyond the form; that is, it captures "the form in movement"*—a movement that finishes freely and in various manners in the fantasy of the writer and in the cooperating and friendly fantasy of the reader, the two coinciding freely and in different ways. All of this happens normally in the context of writing, and it presupposes only nominally another language (in which form finds fulfillment). It is,

in other words, an issue which establishes a rapport between meta-languages and their reciprocal forms.

What is most important to observe is that the word of the screenplay is *thus, contemporaneously, the sign of two different structures*, inasmuch as the meaning that it denotes is double: *and it belongs to two languages characterized by different structures.*

If, in formulating a definition in the necessarily limited field of writing, the sign of the screenplay-text is presented as the sign that denotes a "form in movement," a "form endowed with the will to become another form," in formulating the definition in the wider and more objective field of language the sign of the screenplay-text is presented as the sign that expresses *meanings of a "structure in movement," that is, of "a structure endowed with the will to become another structure."*

This being the situation, what is the typical structure of the metalanguage of the screenplay? It is a "diachronic structure" by definition, or better still, to use that expression that generates a crisis for structuralism (particularly if understood conventionally, as by certain Italian groups), an expression used by Murdock, an actual "process." But a specific process, in that it is not a question of an evolution, of a passage from a phase A to a phase B, but of a pure and simple "dynamism," of a "tension" which moves, without departing or arriving, from a stylistic structure—that of narrative—to another stylistic structure—that of cinema—and, more deeply, from one linguistic system to another.

The screenplay-text's structure, which is "dynamic" but without functionality, and outside the laws of evolution, lends itself perfectly as object for a clash between the by now traditional concept of "structure" and the critical concept of "process." Murdock and Vogt would find themselves confronted by a "process which does not proceed," a structure which makes of the process its own structural characteristic. Lévi-Strauss would find himself confronted not by the values of a "naive philosophy," which determine the "directional" processes, but by an actual will to movement, the will of the author, who, identifying the meanings of a linguistic structure as the typical signs of that structure, at the same time identifies the meanings of another structure. Such a will is specific: it is a given that the observer can observe from the outside, of which he himself is witness. It is not a hypothesized and naively demonstrated will. The synchrony of the system of the screenplay-texts presupposes diachrony as the fundamental element. In other words, I repeat, the process. *We thus have in the laboratory a structure morphologically in movement.*

That an individual, as author, reacts to a system by constructing another one seems to me simple and natural; in the same way in

which men, as authors of history, react to a social structure by building another through revolution, that is, [react] to the will to transform the structure. I therefore don't want to speak, in the terms of American sociological criticism, of "natural" and ontological values and volitions; but I am speaking of a "revolutionary will," both in the author as creator of an individual stylistic system that contradicts the grammatical and literary-jargon system in force, and in men as subverters of political systems.

In the case of authors of screenplay-texts and, to an even greater degree, of films, we are confronted by an odd fact: the presence of a stylistic system where there is still no defined linguistic system and where the structure is not conscious and scientifically described. A director such as Godard, for example, destroys the "grammar" of film before we know what it is.² And it is natural because every personal stylistic system clashes more or less violently with institutional systems. In the case of cinema this happens by analogy with literature. The author, that is, is conscious that his stylistic system (or perhaps more accurately, "writing," as Barthes suggests) contradicts the norm and subverts it, but he does not know what norm it is. There is by now, for example, an actual international school, an "international style" which adopts for cinema the canons of the "language of poetry" and thus cannot fail to disappoint, defy, shatter, play with grammar (which it does not know, because it is the grammar of another language, of a "system of visual signs" which is still not terribly clear in the critical consciousness). This language of poetry, in cinema, is already an actual recent stylistic institution, with its own laws and qualities, which are, one might say, in sympathy with each other: they are recognizable in a film from Paris or a film from Prague, in an Italian film or a Brazilian film. As a film genre, [these films] already tend to have their circuits and their specific avenues of distribution (recently there was a conference on experimental cinema in Italy, where awareness of the need for such events is developing: in the same manner, in other words, in which an editor has his way and his avenue to sell books which were deemed in advance to be of limited circulation, for a chosen public—which, however, is not necessarily a bad deal from a commercial point of view, if the distribution takes place within reasonably budgeted limits).

The distinction between the "language of prose" and the "language of poetry" is an old concept among linguists. But if I had to point to a recent chapter of this distinction, I would suggest a few pages dedicated to this topic in *Writing Degree Zero* by Barthes, in which the distinction is radical and electrifying.³ (I would only add that Barthes's background is French classicism, which is extremely different from Italian, and, above all, that he has a series of progressive sequences of the French language behind him while Italians

have behind them a chaos which makes their classicism increasingly indefinite and sensuous. Furthermore, I would observe that the "isolation of the words" typical of the language of "decadent" poetry has only apparently anticlassicist results, that is, of foregrounding the isolated word—as mystery and monstrosity—over the *general nexus* of the sentence. In fact, if a patient analyst were able to reconstruct the "nexuses" between the "isolated" words of the language of the poetry of the twentieth century, he would always reconstruct classicist nexuses—as every aesthetic operation, as such, requires.)

In conclusion, in cinema we unquestionably have systems or structures, with all the characteristics of every system and of every structure: a patient stylistic examination, such as that of an ethnologist among the Australian tribes, would reconstruct the permanent and solid data of those systems, both as schools (the international "cinema of poetry," as a kind of exquisite gothic) and as actual individual systems.

It is possible to do the same thing through a long and careful analysis of the "usages and customs" of screenplays: here, too, as we all know intuitively or by experience not transformed into scientific research, a series of characteristics in tight rapport among themselves, endowed with a constant continuity, would constitute a "structure" typical of screenplays. We have seen, above, its "dynamic" characteristic, which, it seems to me, is a blatant case of a "diachronic structure," etc., etc. (with the "chronotope" of which Segre speaks as the essential internal element).⁴

The interest which this case offers is the concrete and demonstrable "will" of the author: which seems to me to contradict the assertion of Lévi-Strauss: "One cannot at one and the same time rigorously define a phase A and a phase B (which would be possible only from the outside and in structural terms) and empirically reanimate the passage from one to the other (which would be the only intelligible way of understanding it)."

In fact, in the presence of the "dynamic structure" of a screenplay, *of its will to be a form which moves toward another form*, we can very well define phase A with rigor from the outside and in structural terms (for example, the literary structure of the screenplay) and phase B (the cinematographic structure). But at the same time *we can empirically reanimate the passage from one to the other because the "structure of the screenplay" consists precisely in this: "passage from the literary stage to the cinematographic stage."*

If Lévi-Strauss were wrong in this case and Gurvitch and American sociology, Murdock, Vogt, were right, then we would have to accept the contention of the latter and adopt as our own their necessity to stress more the "process" than the "structure."

Reading, in fact, neither more nor less than reading a screenplay,

means empirically reanimating the passage from a structure A to a structure B.

(1965)

Notes

1. Im-sign or image-sign. See "The 'Cinema of Poetry.'" pp. 167-86.
2. See *ibid.*, pp. 181-83, for Pasolini's discussion of Godard.
3. See *Writing Degree Zero and Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (Boston, 1970), pp. 41-52.
4. See "From the Laboratory," n. 22, for the term "chronotope."

THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE OF REALITY

"It doesn't matter," Socrates used to say, "however, first of all we must be careful that an unpleasant event doesn't befall us."

"Which one?" I ask.

And he answered, "To become misologists; that is, that an aversion and antipathy to all discussion rises in us. In the same way in which another becomes a misanthrope and develops an aversion and an antipathy for his fellow men. *Oh! Truly there is no greater calamity than this antipathy for all discussion.*"

Plato, *Phaedrus*

I

I am listing a few points, not in strictly logical correlation among themselves, which must be kept in mind while reading these pages (as usual so extravagantly interdisciplinary):

a) The theoretical discussions on cinema, until the present, have almost always been of one of the following types: stylistic-hortatory, mythical-essayistic, or technical. In any case, they all had the characteristic of explaining cinema with cinema, thus creating an obscure ontological background. Only the intervention of linguistics and of semiotics—which is very recent—can guarantee the defeat of this ontology and a research of scientific character on cinema.

b) Every discussion on cinema is, first of all, rendered ambiguous by the technical terminology which, until now, respectful of ontological principles as all technical events are, has been the only possible description of the cinematographic phenomenon. The inevitable result is the birth of a duplicate terminology (given that the "technique" of cinema seems to have a much more precise and factual sense than that which, perhaps by simple analogy, is called "literary technique"). For example, the word "frame" belongs to the technical terminology of cinema. A linguistic discussion of cinema cannot use it except in an approximate or secondary manner: a fight for supremacy therefore arises between the expression "frame" and, let's say, the expression "moneme" (the expression "image," belonging to the pseudophilosophical research of the old cinema, by now appears to be an actual archaism).

c) It is probably incorrect to speak of cinema: it would be more correct to speak of "audiovisual technique," which would therefore also include television. Furthermore, the word "cinema" tends to become confused with the film (and until now films have made "cinema," united indistinctly by their prevalently "prose narrative"

*poem as translinguistic action
reality as cinema in nature*

nature: henceforth this will no longer be the case. Cinema is beginning to articulate itself, to separate itself into different special jargons).

d) The ambition of identifying the characteristics of a film language, understood precisely as a language, is born of a Saussurean matrix and environment, but at the same time is scandalous when considered in terms of Saussurean linguistics. It is obviously necessary to amplify and modify the notion of language (much as the presence of machines in cybernetics compels the amplification and modification of the concept of life).

e) The advent of audiovisual techniques, as languages, or at the very least as expressive or artistic vocabularies, puts in question the concept which probably each of us, by force of habit, had of an identification between poetry—or message—and language. Probably, instead—as audiovisual techniques lead us rather brutally to think—every poem is translinguistic. It is an *action* “placed” in a system of symbols, as in a vehicle, which becomes *action* once again in the addressee, while the symbols are nothing more than Pavlovian bells.

From this the idea inevitably derives—born precisely of cinema, that is, from the study of the ways in which cinema reproduces reality—that reality is, in the final analysis, nothing more than cinema in nature. I mean cinema not as stylistic convention, that is, tendentially as silent film, but cinema as audiovisual technique.

If reality is therefore nothing more than cinema in nature, it follows that the first and foremost of the human languages can be considered to be action itself; as the ratio of the reciprocal representation with others and with physical reality.

I am fully aware of the special kind of irrationalism which the word “to act” always carries with itself, inevitably, in philosophy. However, it is a given that it dominates in the modern world and that we can't ignore it. We cannot escape the violence exercised on us by a society which, in assuming technique as its philosophy, tends to always become more rigidly pragmatic, to identify words with things and actions, to recognize the “languages of the infrastructures” as “languages par excellence,” etc. In other words, we cannot ignore the phenomenon of a kind of downgrading of the word, tied to the deterioration of the humanistic languages of the élites, which have been, until now, the guiding languages.

Human action in reality, in other words, as first and foremost language of mankind. For example, the linguistic remains of pre-historic man are modifications of reality due to the actions of necessity: it is in such actions that man expressed himself. Modifications of social structures, with their cultural consequences, etc., are the language with which revolutionaries express themselves. Lenin, in a way, has left a *great poem of action* in writing.

The written-spoken languages are nothing more than an integration of this first language: I obtain my first information concerning a man from the language of his physiognomy, of his behavior, of his apparel, of his rituals, of his body language, of his actions, and also, finally, from his written-spoken language. It is in this way that, in the final analysis, reality is reproduced in cinema.

f) It becomes clear to all, at this point, how *the semiology of the language of human action*, treacherously described here, would thus come to be the most concrete philosophy possible. It is also clear, consequently, how much such a philosophy, produced by a semiological description, would have in common with phenomenology: with Husserl's method, perhaps following Sartre's existential approach. If it is not a tall tale that the subject of existential phenomenology is "me in flesh and blood," that is, that it is I who decipher the language of human action or of reality as representation.

g) The thesis put forth in these pages is that there is an actual audiovisual "*langue*" of cinema and that one can consequently describe or sketch out its grammar (which, as far as I am concerned, is certainly not normative!). But it is an essay by Christian Metz, "Film: Langue or langage?" (*Communications*, n.4), which compels me to review, to rethink, and to refuse many points of my thesis as outlined above.¹

The disagreement between Metz and myself appears to be deep but perhaps not incurable: perhaps reconciliation is possible on the common ground offered by the concept of "discourse" furnished by Buysens, "Les langages et le discours," which I find cited by Metz but which I have yet to read firsthand.² Perhaps the "substance" he speaks of has something in common with the "language of action, or reality itself" to which I alluded above, and which is therefore given as "something linguistic" which is not, however, either "*langue*" or "*parole*." And Metz himself, commenting on this hypothesis by Buysens, exclaims: "Langue, discourse, parole: a complete program!" Furthermore, Metz, in order to abandon his rigid definition of cinema as simple "art language," could make the effort to consider cinema as an enormous deposit of "written language" whose oral correspondent has dissolved: a "written language" composed primarily of texts of narrative, poetry, and documentary essays. Should we perhaps resign ourselves immediately to not hypothesizing a possible "*langue*" predicated on this archaeological material only because it is made up of simple "art language" texts?

And so my rough grammatical outline is born, as a result of a crisis, and negatively, from the reading of Christian Metz's splendid

essay, which, in defining cinema as *linguaggio* and not *lingua*, believes it possible to describe it semiotically, and not to make a grammar of it.³

The points of Metz's theory that I would like to discuss seem to me to be the following:

1) Metz dismantles the preceding linguistic theories concerning cinema without identifying the fact that they were primarily and in part unconsciously stylistic theories: that their code was not linguistic but prosodic. And that, in any case, many aspects of film communication are, given the particular circumstances in which cinema was born (let us reiterate, in fact, that cinema is only a "written" language), of prosodicostylistic derivation. (Moreover, this also happens often for linguistic conventions: many expressions enter into the code, losing their initial expressiveness, etc., etc., and thus becoming conventional processes.)

2) Metz speaks of an "impression of reality" as a characteristic of film communication. I would say that it is a question not of an "impression of reality," but of "reality" itself—as we shall see better further on.

3) Metz has recourse to Martinet, with considerable justification, to demonstrate that cinema cannot be a language.⁴ In fact, Martinet says that there cannot be a language where the phenomenon of "double articulation" does not occur.⁵ But I have two objections to make to this: first and foremost, that (as I said in the preamble) it is necessary to expand and perhaps revolutionize our notion of language, and *perhaps also to be ready to accept the scandalous existence of a language without a double articulation*: second, that it is not true, after all, that this second articulation does not exist in cinema. A form of second articulation also exists in cinema, and this, I believe, is the most relevant point of my paper.

But here is what I mean when I state that cinema, too, has a "second articulation."

It is not true that the smallest unit in cinema is the image, when by image we mean that "view" which is the shot, or, in other words, what one sees looking through the lens. All of us, Metz and I included, have always believed this. Instead: *the various real objects that compose a shot are the smallest unit of film language.*

I believe that there cannot be a shot composed of a single object: because there is no object in nature composed only of itself, and which cannot be further subdivided or broken down, or which, at the least, does not present different "manifestations" of itself.

No matter how detailed the shot, it is always composed of various objects or forms or acts of reality.

If I frame a close-up of a speaking man, and behind I perceive some books, a blackboard, a piece of a map, etc., I cannot say that such a

shot is the smallest unit of my film discourse: because if I exclude one or the other of the real objects in the shot, I change the frame as signifier.

Now, if I wish, I can certainly change the shot. I cannot, however, change the objects which compose it, because they are objects of reality. I can *exclude them* or *include them*, that is all. But, whether I exclude or include them, I have an absolutely special and conditioning relationship with them. Scandalous from a linguistic point of view. Because, in the language that I am using with the shot of this "speaking man"—the language of film—reality, in its real and special objects and manifestations, remains, *is itself an instance of that language*.

To presume to express ourselves cinematographically without using objects, forms, acts of reality, including and incorporating them in our language, would be as absurd and inconceivable as presuming to express ourselves linguistically without using consonants and vowels, that is, phonemes (the components of the second articulation).

The moneme "teacher" cannot be considered apart from the *teach* and, in other words, all the phonemes which compose it: in the same way in which my shot of the teacher cannot be considered apart from the face of the teacher, the blackboard, the books, the piece of map, etc., which compose it.

We can define all the objects, forms, or enduring acts of reality to be found in the film image with the word "kinemes," precisely by analogy with "phonemes."

The phonemes in a language are few, approximately twenty, more or less, in the principal European languages. They are obligatory; we do not have other choices: at best we can try to learn some phonemes which are alien to us and which sound barbaric to our ears—the pharyngeal fricatives, the glottids, the clicks, etc., but we would not be expanding our options by much.

The kinemes have this same characteristic of obligatoriness: we can only choose from among the kinemes that exist, that is, the objects, forms, and acts of reality that we perceive with our senses.

As opposed to the phonemes, which are few, however, the kinemes are infinite, or at least innumerable. But this is not a qualitatively relevant difference. In fact, in the same way in which words or monemes are made up of phonemes, and this composition constitutes the double articulation of language, so the monemes of cinema—the shots—are composed of kinemes. The possibility of composition is equally varied for phonemes and kinemes (it should be noted that the compositional possibilities of linguistic monemes could be infinitely greater than they actually are).

The foremost characteristic of the phonemes is their un-

translatability, that is, their brutality and natural indifference. An object of reality, as cinema, is also per se untranslatable, that is, a brute piece of reality. We are dealing with a different type of untranslatability, certainly less categorical. And this is, perhaps, the weak or questionable aspect of my theory. But, all things considered, however, it also seems to me that if the kinemes, the ultimate elements of the language of cinema, those which correspond to phonemes in language, have characteristics which are—per se—different from those of phonemes, all the same it seems to me that the double articulation is thus assured in the language of cinema. (If there were a need for this.)

I must still add, however:

The language of cinema forms a “visual continuum” or “chain of images”: in other words, it is linear, as is every language, which implies a succession of monemes and kinemes—which necessarily evolves in time. For the monemes, or shots, the demonstration is obvious. For the kinemes—or objects and forms of reality—of which the monemes, or shots, are composed, it is necessary to observe: it is true that they *apparently appear all together to our sight* and, in essence, to our senses, *and not in succession*; but there is nevertheless a succession of perception. We perceive them physically at the same time, but there is no doubt that a cybernetic graph of our perception would indicate a curve of succession. In the moneme that I took as an example, the shot of the close-up of the teacher, in reality we pick out successively the kinemes of the face, then that of the blackboard, then that of the books, then that of the map (or in a different order): it is, in sum, an addition of real details that indicate to us that the man is a teacher.

We know, furthermore, that beyond guaranteeing the economy of language the “double articulation” also guarantees its stability. But cinema doesn’t need such a process of collective stabilization in showing an object, because it uses the object itself as part of the signifier: thus the “value of the signified” is definitively assured!

We also know—still following in Martinet’s footsteps—that every language has its own particular articulation, and that consequently “the words in one language do not have exact equivalents in another.” But does this perhaps contradict the notion of a film language? No, not at all; because film is an international or universal language, the same for anyone who uses it. Therefore it is physically impossible to compare the language of cinema with another language of cinema.

Still paraphrasing Martinet, who represents the final and defining moment of Saussurean linguistics, we could conclude these first notes with the following definition of the language of cinema: “The language of cinema is an instrument of communication according

to which we analyze human experience—in an *identical* manner in the different communities—in units which reproduce the semantic content and endow the monemes (or shots) with *audiovisual* expression; the audiovisual expression, in turn, is articulated in distinct, successive units, the *kinemes* or objects, forms, and acts of reality, which remain *reproduced* in the linguistic system—which are discrete, unlimited, and the same for all men regardless of their nationality.

From this it follows (still paraphrasing Martinet) that: (1) the language of cinema is an instrument of communication which has a double articulation and is endowed with a manifestation consisting in the audiovisual reproduction of reality; (2) the language of cinema is one and universal, and there is therefore no justification for comparisons with other languages: its arbitrariness and conventionality concern only itself.

III

Before sketching the outline of my grammar of the language of cinema, I must, however, reiterate what I said above in piecemeal fashion or implicitly, enunciating it in more definitive and violent terms.

It is well known that what we call language, in general, is composed of oral language and written language. They are two different matters: the first is natural and, I would say, existential. Its means of communication is the mouth and its means of perception the ear: the channel is thus mouth-ear. As opposed to written language, oral language brings us without historical discontinuity to our origins, when such oral language was nothing more than a "cry," or a language of biological necessities, or, better still, of conditioned reflexes. There is a permanent aspect of oral language which remains unchanging. Oral language is thus a "static continuum," like nature, outside, that is, of historical evolution. There is an aspect of our oral communication that is therefore purely natural.

Written language is a convention that fixates this oral language and substitutes the graphic eye-reproduction channel for the mouth-ear channel.

Well, "cinema," too, can lay claim to a dichotomy which is strangely, and perhaps some will say insanely, analogous to this one.

To make myself understood I must refer to the statement (see above) that there is first of all a *language of action* (which we can define by analogy as semiological with expressions such as "language of style," "language of flowers," etc., etc.). I have spoken of a poem of action referring to Lenin. . . . Well, pushed perhaps by the

wave of empiricism on the one hand and of moralism on the other, which are overwhelming our contemporary world, I want to insist on this point.

It seems to me that the first language of men is their actions. The written-spoken language is nothing more than an integration and a means of such action. Even the moment of greatest detachment of language from such human action—that is, the purely expressive aspect of language, poetry—is in turn nothing more than another form of action: if, in the instant in which the reader listens to it or reads it, in other words, perceives it, he frees it again from linguistic conventions and re-creates it as the dynamic of feelings, of affections, of passions, of ideas, he reduces it to an audiovisual entity, that is, the reproduction of reality, of action—and so the circle is closed.

What is necessary, therefore, is the semiology of the language of action or, in simplest terms, of reality. That is, to expand the horizons of semiology and of linguistics to such an extent as to lose our heads at the very thought or to smile with irony, as is proper for specialists to do. But I have said from the beginning that this linguistic research of cinema matters to me, more than in itself, for the philosophical implications which it demands (perhaps even if I see them not as philosopher, but as poet, impatient to get to his own work . . .).

In reality, we make cinema by living, that is, by existing practically, that is, by acting. *All of life in the entirety of its actions is a natural, living film; in this sense, it is the linguistic equivalent of oral language in its natural and biological aspect.*

By living, therefore, we represent ourselves, and we observe the representation of others. The reality of the human world is nothing more than this double representation in which we are both actors and spectators: a gigantic happening, if you will.

And in the same way in which we think linguistically—within ourselves, in silence, with what might be defined as a shorthand composed of rough, extremely rapid and also extremely expressive, albeit inarticulate, words—in the same way we also have the possibility, within us, to sketch out a cinematographic monologue; the processes of dreams and of memory, both involuntary and, above all, voluntary, are the primordial outlines of a film language, understood as conventional representations of reality. When we remember, we project in our heads small, interrupted, contorted or lucid sequences of a film.

Now these archetypes of reproduction of the language of action or, in the simplest of terms, of reality (which is always action) have found concrete form in a common mechanical medium, the cin-

ematographic. *It is, therefore, nothing more than the "written" manifestation of a natural, total language, which is the acting of reality.* In other words, the possible "language of action," for lack of a better definition, has found a means of mechanical reproduction similar to the convention of written language as compared to oral language.

I don't know if there is something monstrous, irrationalistic, and pragmatic in my references to a "total language of action," of which written-spoken languages are no more than an integration, in that they are an instrumental symbol of it; and of which film language would instead be the written or reproduced equivalent, which would respect its totality, it is true, but also its ontological mystery, its natural undifferentiation, etc.—a sort of reproductive memory without interpretation. Certainly it may be that I am obeying a delirious necessity of the contemporary world, which tends precisely to remove the expressivity and philosophical quality of language itself, and to dethrone as a linguistic guide the languages of the superstructures and to install in their place those of the infrastructures—poor, conventional, and practical; they truly are a pure and simple integration of the living action! Whatever; these things have come into my mind and it is necessary that I say them. From the great poem of action of Lenin to the small page of action prose of an employee of Fiat or of a ministry, life is unquestionably drawing away from the classical humanistic ideals and is losing itself in pragmatics. *The film (with the other audiovisual techniques) appears to be the written language of this pragmatism.** But it may also be its salvation, precisely because it expresses it—and it expresses it from the inside, producing itself from itself and reproducing it.

But enough, and let us come to the draft of my grammatical outline. (Note that this grammatical outline stands in relation to a grammar as do the now brief pages of the index, with the titles of the chapters.)

IV

The foundation and determination of the grammar of cinema is the fact that the minimal units of the language of cinema are objects, forms, and actions of reality which have been reproduced and have become a stable, fundamental element of the signifier.

This persistence, through the mechanical reproduction of reality

*Here and elsewhere Pasolini uses the Greek *pragma* instead of the Italian *pragmatismo*.—Ed.

9 phases / reproduction
reproduction
qualification
verbalization

in the language of cinema, instead of becoming merely symbolic—as in written-spoken language—gives this language a completely special constitution.

Written-spoken language is neither a reproduction nor a nomenclature; however, without horrifying the linguists, I believe one can say that in its morphological, grammatical, and syntactical modes it is, so to speak, *parallel* to the reality that it expresses. In other words, the grammatical chain of signifiers is parallel to the series of signifieds. Its linearity is the linearity through which we perceive reality itself.

A graph of the grammatical modes of written-spoken language could thus be a *horizontal line* parallel to the line of reality—a world to be signified, or more simply, with a daring neologism, a *Significando* (a word with which it would always be right to humbly indicate Reality).

Instead, the graph of the grammatical modes of film language could be a *vertical line*: a line, that is, that *fishes* in the Significando, continuously takes it upon itself, incorporating it in itself through its immanence in the mechanical audiovisual reproduction.

What does the grammar of the language of cinema *fish* from reality? It fishes its smallest units, the units of the second articulation: the objects, the forms, the acts of reality which we have called "kinemes." After having fished them, it keeps them in itself, encapsulating them in its units of first articulation, the monemes—that is, the shots.

In this vertical axis which fishes in reality, that is, in this grammar of the language of cinema, we can distinguish the following four modes: (1) Modes of orthography or reproduction; (2) Modes of creating substantives; (3) Modes of qualification; (4) Modes of verbalization or of syntax.

These four phases of the grammar of film are successive, obviously, only in a theoretical construct.

I. Modes of Reproduction (or Orthography)

They consist of that series of techniques—which are acquired during one's apprenticeship—that are suitable to reproduce reality: the knowledge of the camera, of the process of shooting, of the problems of lighting, etc.; and furthermore, practice in the composition of the raw material of film. (In this context I wish to recall that the analogy between cinema and the figurative arts has always been a questionable concept. The composition of the world in terms of presences and absences, etc., in front of the camera, has some analogy with painting only in the sense that both film and painting

"reproduce" reality with means proper to each. And this reproduction of reality gives to film—and perhaps also to painting—the characteristic of that abnormal and special language which is *solely a written language*, "the written language of action." There are therefore certain elements—let us call them compositional—that are in the matrix of both cinema and painting; it is with these that cinema is concerned—only indirectly, therefore, and as a result of a stylistic decision of the author, through the previous experience of painting.) In addition to the norms of cinematographic reproduction, the norms of sound reproduction are also part of the orthographic mode, because the reproduction of reality, indispensable to obtaining the units of second articulation, is an audiovisual reproduction. (Therefore I absolutely reject the notion that the true cinema is the silent cinema. It may be the true form of the art film, and in any case it belongs to the stylistic history of cinema, and I am not surprised that abandoning silent films caused so much pain to authors. It was, in fact, a meter of sorts, of extremely limiting prosody and, precisely as such, it was extremely imaginative. Silent film can thus still be the stylistic "choice" of the author who loves a strong and obsessive selectivity of prosodic options.)

2. *Modes of Creating Substantives*

I have called this aspect of grammar the creation of substantives, by analogy with the "substantives" of language. In reality the name is not correct, and it would be necessary to invent another. Shots or monemes can represent objects, forms, or acts of reality—that is, mobile or immobile reality, reality detailed or generalized, etc.—however, *as shot*, it has the *unchanging characteristic of creating a moneme with the units of second articulation*. This moneme is in itself and at the same time a noun, an adjective, or a verb—according to our usage. As we shall see, however, its qualities as adjective or verb affect the moneme only in a second phase; its first phase is that of being simply a moneme, that is, in the simplest of terms, a word which, because of its special nature—given that it is composed of objects—is primarily a substantive.

I believe that in the "modes of creating substantives" one must distinguish two phases:

1) The limitation of the second unit of articulation, that is, of the kinemes. This means that the person who speaks in terms of cinema must always choose from the unlimited objects, forms, and actions of reality according to what he wants to say. In short, he must first of all try to make *a closed list from the list of kinemes*. This will never be possible, and therefore only a relative closure, or a

tendency toward closure, will be achieved. From this predictably derives an "open list" of the units of first articulation or film monemes (shots); these can therefore be infinite. But the precautionary or potential limitation of the kinemes will cause what we might call the "infinity of signs" of film words to find a limit precisely in the units of second articulation that constitute them—a limitation that produces, then, both an open list of monemes and their tendency to a less particular and transitory form of monosemia. Example: I want to describe a school. I immediately set a limit to the infinite things in reality, a choice of those things in the context of the academic environment. The shot of the teacher in front of a blackboard, a map, etc., is a moneme which is presented as tendentially monosemic: a teacher. While, in short, the "nature" of phonemes is *in us*, a subjective fact of the speaking individual—that is, of his body—the "nature" of kinemes is in the reality outside of us, in the social and physical world. It conserves those characteristics of this reality that cannot be eliminated. By this I mean that if cinema, as lexicon, that is, as a series of monemes (and semantemes and morphemes) is an individual and universal language, still as lexicon it is differentiated ethnically and historically. I will not find a burnoose among the kineme-objects of the Western world. I will instead find it in the Orient. Hence the substitution of national language differences, with some ethnohistorical variants.

2) The establishment of an always changeable series of nouns, contour lines, in their moment of the pure and simple shot, understood as a set of kinemes, and not considered in terms of their values of quality, duration, opposition, and rhythm. The shot, as a set of kinemes pure and simple, is thus a word which has the character of a noun, is not qualified, nor is it placed in relation to the rest of the discourse through syntactical (or editing) ties.

Thus understood, the substantive shot or moneme *corresponds to what is called in written-spoken languages the relative clause*. Each shot, in short, represents "something which is": a teacher *who* teaches, students *who* listen, horses *that* run; a boy *who* smiles; a woman *who* looks, etc., etc., or simply an object *which* is there. This series of relative clauses formed by a single moneme is the so-called "material" of the film. Such relative clause monemes, as lexical collection, are ideally fixed; if the camera catches them in movement they must be considered to be as numerous as are the theoretical shots of which the camera movement is composed.

Finally, it should be understood that there is no coincidence between "moneme" and shot; very often a shot is a sequence, however minimal, in which two or more monemes or relative clauses are *accumulated*.

The first form of syntax—that is, technically, of editing—thus

may be found within the shot, through the *accumulation* of relative clauses.

3. *Modes of Qualification*

Various phases (not chronological, naturally) can also be distinguished in modes of qualification. As the word states, the means of qualification serve to qualify the substantives gathered in the manner described above, and are therefore different.

1) Profilmic qualification. This is used primarily in narrative (that is, nondocumentary) films. It consists of pure and simple exploitation, or the transformation of the reality to be reproduced. Or in the "makeup" of objects and persons. In the example already used, if the teacher is too young while he should be elderly, he is made up with white hair, etc. If the shot does not strike the director as being sufficiently expressive—to be that noun–relative clause which he wants to pick up—the objects are moved (for example, the blackboard in the shot already mentioned in the example can't be seen enough? Well, it will be hung lower, etc.). Still, profilmic qualification tends to belong more to the prosody and to the stylistics of film than to its grammar.

2) Filmic qualification. This qualification of the noun–relative clause of which the film moneme is composed is obtained through the use of the camera and has well-noted characteristics.

Filmic qualification includes the choices of the lenses with which to capture that set of real units that compose the shot.

Filmic qualification includes the distance of the lens from that set of real units that must be shot; that is, the definitions extreme close-up, close-up, two shot and long shot, master shot, are technical definitions of qualification.

Let us continue with the example of the teacher: with the modes of creating substantives we have made a choice of objects, forms, and actions taken from reality which, framed together—that is, having become a moneme—form the noun relative clause "a teacher who teaches." With the qualification described above, we can thus have "a teacher who teaches while laughing" or "an angry teacher who teaches" (profilmic qualification), and "a teacher who teaches seen close up," "a teacher who teaches seen in long shot," "a teacher who teaches an unexpected thing," etc. (filmic qualification).

It remains to be said that filmic qualification can be active or passive. It is active when it is the camera that moves or that, in any case, prevails (for example: a zoom shot of "the teacher who

teaches," or a tracking shot "of the teacher who teaches"). It is passive when the camera is motionless or is not felt, while the real object moves (for example: the camera remains on the teacher, who moves toward and away from it as he teaches). Naturally one also has a "deponent" qualification when the movement of the camera and of the object in reality annul each other or in any case have an equal value.

At this point I would like to clarify one fact. *Active and passive qualifications refer to the reproduced reality.* That is, if in the close-up of the moving teacher the camera is still, the qualification is active, because it is the teacher *who acts*; if, instead, in the close-up of the teacher the camera moves—drawing near, moving away, panning, etc.—the filmic qualification is passive, because this time the teacher is *affected* by the camera.

If the active qualification predominates, the film tends to be realistic, because reality acts in and on it, which implies the author's faith in the objectivity of reality (cf. John Ford).

If the passive qualification predominates, the film is lyrical-subjective, because it is the author with his style who acts, which implies a subjective vision of reality on his part (cf. Godard).

4. Modes of Verbalization (or Syntax)

The technical definition of these modes is "editing."

But, this time too, we must distinguish two types or two phases of editing.

1) Denotative Editing

It consists of a series of connections, elliptical by definition, between various shots or monemes, giving them first of all a "length" and subsequently a linking whose function is the communication of an articulated discourse. It is, in sum, the syntactical phase: coordination and subordination.

The first effect of this "denotative" or purely syntactical "editing" is that the monemes lose their characteristic as first phase, that is, of being noun-relative clauses, and become quite simply the monemes typical of the film, with the respective qualification.

Since the one and only characteristic of editing is to establish an oppositional relationship, it is precisely through this oppositional relationship that it fulfills its syntactical function.

Denotative editing in fact puts the two shots in oppositional relationship, juxtaposing them by ellipsis: "the teacher *who* teaches" and "the students *who* listen," etc. But it is precisely in this

oppositional relationship that syntax is born; that is, finally, the sentence "the teacher who teaches the students."

This series of extremely simple "oppositions" thus requires a type of syntax which we can call *additive* in opposition to the *accumulative* syntax which we have said occurs when the "relative clauses" accumulate within one shot, understood as a however-minimal sequence shot.

These additions are what the experts of editing call "links": that is, they link one shot to the next, establishing their duration. What follows is a series of clauses or a "set of clauses" which could better be defined as "syntactical complements," in that they are placed exactly between the clause and the complement.

I will give one example: I have two shots or monemes: the relative clauses "the teacher *who* looks" and "the students *who* look." If I add the second to the first, the clause "the students who look" becomes the direct object complement and thus I have the sentence, "the teacher *who* looks at the students."

It is sufficiently clear from this example that the syntax of cinema is inevitably progressive. It forms "series" of clauses, or better, of syntactical complements. This series, ongoing as the result of a series of additions, is progressive precisely because if, for example, I place the direct object clause first, the meaning of the whole changes ("the students who look at the teacher"). The special syntax of cinema is thus a rough linear progressive series: everything which in language is parenthesis, change of tone, melodic line, *cursus*, etc., is realized in cinema as expressive language, as we shall see, by the rhythms—that is, by the reciprocal relationships of the duration of the clauses.

2) Rhythmic (or Connotative) Editing

It is difficult to establish the real relationship between denotative editing and rhythmic or connotative editing; up to a certain point they coincide. Beyond a certain point the rhythmic editing would appear to be typical of a form of expressiveness which should be opposed to denotation as such.*

The rhythmic montage defines the duration of the shots, in and of themselves and relative to the other shots of the context.

The "duration" established by the rhythmic editing is *therefore*

*This confusion probably depends on the fact that while monemes consist of a reproduction of reality, their rhythms, that is, their relations, do not; everything in cinema is reproduced from reality, but not the rhythms which only accidentally coincide with those of reality. It is in the rhythms, therefore, that is, in the editing, that one can speak most of all of arbitrariness and conventionality in the language of cinema.

before all else an additional qualification. In fact, if I pause on the shot of "the teacher who teaches" only for the time necessary to perceive it, the qualification is profilmic, while if I stop more or less than necessary, the qualification becomes, however, expressive; and if I stop *much* more or *much* less than necessary, the qualification becomes actively filmic, that is, it causes us to be aware of that camera which, even while shooting, could also have been motionless. Its presence is felt precisely in the irregularity of the length of the shot itself.

When instead the "duration" is not considered as such but relative to the other shots of the film, then we enter into the real field of rhythmic editing.

Even in the most aridly communicative and inexpressive film—that is, in the most potentially exploitative film language—there is the presence of a rhythm which is born of the relations of length between the various shots, and of the length of the entire film. As simple relationship of duration between the various shots, the rhythm is necessary to the most prosaic and practical actual communication of the film.

The "rhythmeme" therefore assumes particular value in the language of cinema, both in communicative editing and rhythmic editing carried to the limits of expression. In the latter case it becomes the principal rhetorical figure in cinema, whereas in literature it appears to be secondary or at least in second place.

v

Certainly, considering cinema as undifferentiated "*parole*," without those complexities which real "*paroles*" have—specific jargons, dialects, technical languages, literary languages with their sub-species formed, for example, by the languages of prose and the languages of poetry, etc., etc.—it is difficult to differentiate such a "*parole*" from an at least potential "*langue*." And it seems to me that it may be precisely this which pushes Metz to see in cinema either a "*parole*" or a language, that is, to believe that film may have a stylistics or a semiotics, but not a grammar.

The lack of differentiation of the various film "*paroles*" has been a given—but not peremptory, to tell the truth, and not objectively verifiable—until today. But over the past few years that differentiation has been growing more attenuated. At the very least we can observe the outlines of a "language of prose" (differentiated into a language of narrative prose and a language of documentary-essay prose: the "*cinéma vérité*," etc.) and a "language of poetry." It is precisely the possibility of speaking grammatically with absolute

indifference, with the same identical terms, of two products about which instead a discourse on style must make appeal to different definitions—concerning, in sum, two facts that are as differentiated as the film of prose and the film of poetry—which I feel confirms the validity of my thesis of film “*langue*” as a codifiable code beyond the concrete presence of different types of film messages.

I want to take two small excerpts from a prose film and from a poetic film and analyze them. *We shall see that the stylistic analysis can apply to different and even opposite words and expressions, while the grammatical analysis applies to the same identical terminology.*

Thus, as in the stylistic examination of a piece of classical or modern poetry, and of an extract from an essay or from a narrative; however different the stylemas may be (and certain stylemas of modern poetry are extravagant to the point of impossibility), the terms noun, adjective, verb, coordination, subordination, etc., will serve indifferently for the grammatical analysis of the prose and of the poetry. A certain sign of the linguistic code underlying the messages, and of their abstraction.

Let us go on to the screening of two brief sequences, the one in prose taken from *Time Stood Still* by Ermanno Olmi and the one in poetry from Bernardo Bertolucci's *Before the Revolution*.⁶

Well, Olmi's film is a film “in prose,” Bertolucci's film is a film “in poetry.”

Let us take the opening of Olmi's film, a brief segment.

I still don't know what practices to adopt in the grammatical and syntactical analysis of a film, but, following what I said above, I will try to make an experiment, which is, of necessity, as vague as it is typical.

For the time being let us observe together the first eleven shots of the film.

As I was saying, the “grammar” of cinema is a vertical grammar: ideally it always fishes in reality. Let us therefore follow this vertical line moment by moment, keeping in mind that the process is arbitrary (in the same way it is when a student does the grammatical analysis of a sentence, then the logical analysis, and then the analysis of the sentence as a whole).

First Shot (30")

Modes of Creating Substantives

a) First phase (or limitation of the units of second articulation). I will deal with this first phase by analyzing only the first two shots, because then, obviously, the operation will be the same throughout the film. Besides, it's very simple: the “closed list” of the kinemes

consists of the reduction of the world to be reproduced to *the world of objects, forms, and acts at a small dam in the Alps*. Such objects, forms, and acts of reality are thus strongly technified and particularized; they belong to individual families, to series. The monemes which are composed of these units of second articulation therefore tend strongly to a sort of monosemic potentiality.

b) Filmic qualification. Brief sequence shot: the movements of the camera consist of a backward tracking shot "to discover" the two men who play, and in a pan to follow the winner who goes to get the book. Thus it is an active qualification (when the camera is motionless) and deponent (when the movement of the camera coincides functionally with the movement of the character). There is a single passive moment, and it is the backward track to discover the two. (We shall see that it is the only example of passive qualification in the entire sequence and possibly in the entire film.)

Modes of Verbalization (or Syntax)

It is, I repeat, a sequence shot, that is, a "sentence" formed by the accumulation of four relative clauses. It finishes with a dissolve, that is, with a moment of pause which concludes it.

Second Shot (Master Shot, 15")

Modes of Creating Substantives

Three accumulated monemes: "A man *who* extinguishes the lights in the room, *who* goes out, and *who* closes the door" (here—we observe, for the first phase—we have the addition of a new kineme, a pile of snow in front of the window, intended to limit semically what we have seen until now to a mountain environment, etc.).

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: zero, as above.

Filmic qualification: fixed, active master shot. (The fact that the camera, however, is placed outside and shoots through the window causes *it to be felt*. I have not contemplated such a situation in my sketch. It creates the possibility of a series of exceptions as a result of which a still camera is not necessarily always an operation of active qualification.)

Modes of Syntax

This time also we have a rapid shot-sequence formed by the accumulation of the coordinated relative clauses. This time also this sequence shot is closed by the long pause of the dissolve.

Third Shot (Pan of the Mountains, 21")

Modes of Creating Substantives

"Mountains that rise against the sky."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification. Zero, as above: the adjectives are those of reality itself.

Filmic qualification. Pan of the motionless mountains: therefore, passive qualification.

Modes of Syntax

Regular addition to the subsequent moneme to create a relationship of syntactical unity (making of the whole of the mountains something like a complement of time or place, or a temporal clause—just so that we understand each other).

A long sentence begins here that unites among themselves, always through the same type of addition, the following six shots (from four to nine), which, since they are identical, I will not analyze one by one. For all of them, in fact, the substantivation consists of the relative clause "our man *who* passes," the profilmic qualification is zero, and the filmic qualification is entirely active (the camera is in fact always motionless and is not felt; one feels only the camera angles—to tell the truth). Also, the syntactical additions are all equal and regular (the man goes off-camera, leaving the frame empty; to this another empty shot is added, where the man reenters the frame).

Tenth Shot (Motionless Master Shot, 19")

Here the sentence finishes, making of this master shot a sort of syntactical complement of location: the apparition of the shack as the destination of the six preceding "passages."

Modes of Creating Substantives

"Our man *who* arrives at the shack, *who* leans his skis against it, *who* touches an object near the door."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification, as usual, zero.

Active filmic qualification (a long motionless shot that constitutes a brief sequence shot in which the three or four relative clauses we have mentioned are accumulated).

Modes of Syntax

Regular addition to the preceding moneme, and the same with the following, which is a long shot of the same man.

*Eleventh Shot (Long Shot, 11")**Modes of Creating Substantives*

"Our protagonist *who* picks up a garbage pail, *who* opens the door, and *who* enters."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: zero.

Filmic qualification: motionless long shot (active), then long shot pan which takes in the garbage pail (deponent).

Modes of Syntax

Regular addition, in the context of the continuity of the action, with the preceding moneme and with the following.

Let us now consider this necessarily rough and approximative analysis.

The first phase of the modes of creating substantives gives the language of Olmi a strongly detailed coloration and ensures it—given its deep selectivity—a certain monosemic potentiality. On the second phase of the substantivation, that is, the collection of the relative clause monemes, there is nothing to observe, *because this operation is identical and undifferentiated for all films*. The discussion of the qualification, instead, is important, and well defined stylistic conclusions can be drawn from it (whose terminology, I believe, in the final analysis, is also documented). Profilmic qualification, in fact, does not exist: what does this mean? That we are in the presence of a documentary, and that therefore the author has not disguised reality in any way: he has not qualified it, neither the inert objects nor the living objects (such as the actor); he has left it intact. The filmic qualification, then, is all active or deponent (there is only one very slight, and perhaps arguable, case of passivity). This means that the camera is not felt, and that what counts is the real action. And this in turn implies a strong faith in reality on Olmi's part, his conviction in the objective existence of reality (of which the camera is a function and which it serves). According to Olmi one must therefore feel the real action, not the camera that reproduces it. The syntactical modes are all extremely communicative or informative; the durations which the editing assigns to the individual shots are exact, their synchronization is correctly slow; as for the syntactical additions between moneme and moneme, they are all perfectly regular (entries and exits from the frame, approaches on the same axis and in movement, etc., etc.). Moreover, much of the syntax results from accumulations of brief sequence shots. Thus, rhythmic expressiveness never prevails over the rhythm which is necessarily born of the denotative editing. There are neither flights nor standstills. Even the two curious initial dissolves do not appear as abnormal. Their function is simply to indicate a deliberate slowness of the rhythm of the real time, not a violation of the rhythm.

Let us now observe the thirteen shots of a brief sequence of Bertolucci's film.

*First Shot (Master Shot, m 10.63)**Modes of Creating Substantives*

a) First phase: in Bertolucci as in Olmi the limitation of the units of second articulation is strongly detailed: the series of objects tending to form *the closed list of the kinemes* belongs to the urban milieu of Parma and to its bourgeois interiors. Each moneme that is composed of it thus has a strong monosemic tendency here, too.

b) The relative clause monemes specific to this shot, gathered and coordinated by accumulation, are "the heroine *who* enters the room, *who* turns on the light, *who* puts her purse on the bed, *who* takes off her overcoat."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: the expressive intensity of the actress, who mimes a neurotic attack (as we shall see later).

Filmic qualification: motionless (active) shot with short focal-length lens, tending to be a sequence shot, that is, to accumulate monemes by coordination.

Modes of Syntax

The connection to the following shot occurs through illogical addition, not through a regular progression.

*Second Shot (Bed, m 3.60)**Modes of Creating Substantives*

"Bed on which a pack of cigarettes and a lighter fall."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: zero.

Filmic qualification: motionless (active) shot.

Modes of Syntax

Illogical addition by jump cut with the preceding moneme; same with the following moneme. Consequently, the qualification is rendered passive (the editing, in other words, causes us to feel the presence of the camera—to speak in technical, and poor, terms).

*Third Shot (Detail, m 1.51)**Modes of Creating Substantives*

"A hand *that* takes a photograph."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: zero.

Filmic qualification: detail, with long lens, motionless (active, but rendered passive by the further qualification due to the editing, as we have seen).

Modes of Syntax

Illogical addition or by jump cut with the preceding shot, and also with the following.

*Fourth Shot (Face of the Actress, m 1.51)**Modes of Creating Substantives*

"The heroine *who* observes"

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: expressive play of the actress, who mimes, etc., etc.

Filmic qualification: close-up with long lens, motionless (active, but rendered passive, as we have already seen several times, by the editing phase of qualification).

Modes of Syntax

Illogical addition or by jump cut with the preceding monemes; logical but irregular addition with the following.

*Fifth Shot (Actress on the Bed, m 0.91)**Modes of Creating Substantives*

"Photographs *which* are in a circle on the bed around the heroine."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: zero.

Filmic qualification: long shot, *excluding the head*, motionless, and therefore active, but rendered passive as usual by the irregularity of the editing (exclusion of the head).

Modes of Syntax

Logical but irregular addition with the preceding moneme; logical addition according to the procedure of the point-of-view shot with the following.

*Sixth Shot (Photographs, m 7.70)**Modes of Creating Substantives*

"Photographs *which* are looked at by the heroine."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: choice of "real" photographs of the actress who plays the heroine.

Filmic qualification: circular pan of the photographs, and therefore passive (in fact they are seen by the actress).

Modes of Syntax

Regular addition with the preceding moneme (which, according to the procedure of the point-of-view shot, causes the heroine to be the

subject and the observed pictures to be the direct object); regular addition with the following (as a result of the continuity of the action).

Seventh Shot (Heroine, Bed, and Photographs, m 3.72)

Modes of Creating Substantives

"The heroine *who* looks at photographs" (thus a continuation of the preceding action).

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: mimetic expressiveness of the actress.

Filmic qualification: long shot of heroine, motionless, then active, perhaps made passive by the qualifying phase of the editing (still in the sense that the duration of the action is stressed).

Modes of Syntax

Regular addition with the preceding through the continuation of the action; the same goes for the following.

Eighth Shot (Photographs, m 1.59)

Modes of Creating Substantives

"Photographs *which* are looked at by the heroine."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: choice of "real" photographs of the actress herself.

Filmic qualification: pan of the photographs in detail, passive.

Modes of Syntax

Logical, regular addition with the preceding moneme, according to the procedure of the point-of-view shot; illogical addition and (even absurd and scandalous) jump cut to the following.

Ninth Shot (Master Shot, Room, m 4.67)

Modes of Creating Substantives

"Heroine *who* moves in the bedroom."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: zero.

Filmic qualification: motionless master shot, and therefore active, but rendered passive by the qualification of the editing, because of the absurdity of the addition with the preceding moneme; followed by the passive movement of the zoom on the bed.

Modes of Syntax

Illogical addition or jump cut with the preceding moneme or with the following.

Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth Shots (Photographs, respectively m 0.57, 0.53, 0.34)

Modes of Creating Substantives

We have three twin monemes, each of which consists of the relative clause: "a photograph *which* is there."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: "real" photographs, etc., as above.

Filmic qualification: motionless details, therefore active (but as usual rendered passive by the absurdity of the editing, which causes us to feel the reproductive presence of the camera).

Modes of Syntax

Illogical addition, by means of jump cut, with the preceding moneme, and with the following. (I want to point out here immediately that, finding the photographs on the bed, after they had disappeared, the "progression" which is typical of the cinematographic syntactical succession is scandalously violated. The repetition of a preceding action which was already finished seems to suggest the possibility of a regressive syntax of succession; in reality it is only a case of a movement backwards or of a new beginning, and therefore of an iteration.)

Thirteenth Shot (Heroine on the Bed, etc., m 3.70)

Modes of Creating Substantives

"Heroine *who* looks at the photographs on the bed."

Modes of Qualification

Profilmic qualification: as above (mimetic performance of the actress).

Filmic qualification: long shot; shot from closer or with a lens with a longer focal length—motionless and therefore active, but rendered passive once more by the syntax of the editing.

Modes of Syntax

Addition by jump cut with the preceding moneme, same with the following moneme. It is the continuation of that repeated action of which I was speaking above.

A dissolve ends this repeated progressive sequence.

Observations: the first observation to make is that all the qualification belongs to the first phase of the denotative editing. That is, in the act of qualifying his Parma monemes cinematographically, Bertolucci does not, in this case, cause us to feel the camera; so that the qualification would appear to be an active qualification exactly typical of reality in action, implying on the

part of the author a faith in its objectivity, etc., if the editing did not come into play just to render it instead all passive, that is, to make the activity of the camera felt; thus the presence of the subject[ive] author prevails over the objectivity of reality.

To further accentuate the subjectivity of the story, we have a prevarication⁷ of the expressive editing, with its nonfunctional rhythms, over the denotative editing, whose rhythms are by definition functional. In fact, if you compare the length of the monemes among themselves, and if you observe them in and of themselves, you will see that they are characterized by a strong and almost arbitrary irregularity and asymmetry.

Finally, as I have already pointed out, the typical process of succession of the syntax of cinema, which does not join the syntactical complements but lines them up progressively, tends to be contradicted; in truth, a different type of syntax does not result from this—rather, the result is a story told through a renewed beginning and repetition which is absolutely irregular in the language of the cinema.

In short, if I had to reproduce the Bertolucci excerpt linguistically by means of analogy, I would have to resort to rhetorical figures which are typical of poetry, while if I had to do the same thing for Olmi's film, I would put together a prose, even if a prose gently soaked in the "poetry of things."

Therefore, I feel that, as I had planned at the beginning of this brief analysis, I have used an identical descriptive language in describing two so completely different sequences; that is, the neutral and undifferentiated language belonging to grammatical analysis and applicable to every code. I say grammatical and not simply semiotic analysis because to me it seems much more complicated and complex than a description of language, and that it is endowed with actual regular processes, even if they concern a *completely abnormal language inasmuch as it is only written*. If, then, Metz were to demonstrate to me and to convince me that I am wrong (it is a hypothesis that I accept without bias or false attachments to coherence), then this grammatical sketch of mine could be offered as a unique kind of technical-stylistic code which nevertheless does not exhaust the linguistic problems of cinematographic communication.

One fact is certain, in any case; that it is necessary to work on these problems, together or alone, with competence or with anger, but it is necessary to work. It is necessary to create ideology; it is necessary to destroy ontology. Audiovisual techniques are in large measure already a part of our world, that is, of the world of technical neocapitalism, which moves ahead, and whose tendency it is to deprive its techniques of ideology or to make them ontological; to

make them silent and unrelated; to make them habits; to make them religious forms. We are lay humanists or, at least, non-misologist Platonists, and we must therefore fight to demystify the "innocence of technique" to the last drop of blood.

(1966)

Notes

1. "Le cinéma: langue ou langage?" *Communications*, 4 (Paris, 1964), "Numero special, Recherches Semiologiques," 52-90, was reprinted in Metz's book *Essais sur la signification au cinéma* (Paris, 1969), pp. 39-93, and is included in his *Film Language* (New York, 1974), pp. 31-91.

2. Eric Buysens, *Les langages et le discours, essai de linguistique fonctionnelle dans le cadre de la semiologie* (Brussels, 1943). Buysens writes: "Only discourse is at the same time an act and an abstraction: it is an ideal act" (p. 31).

3. Both *lingua* and *linguaggio* may be translated as "language." *Lingua*, however, is the more standard and specific term; *linguaggio* often refers to jargons or restricted vocabularies such as scientific language, legal language, etc., or to the activity of speaking or expressing, as in "the language of flowers."

4. See Introduction, n. 18, for Metz's publications making use of Martinet.

5. Martinet, *Elements of General Linguistics*, trans. Elizabeth Palmer (Chicago, 1964), pp. 22-29.

6. *Time Stood Still* (1959) is Olmi's first feature film after numerous documentaries. See "The 'Cinema of Poetry,'" n. 12, for *Before the Revolution*.

7. "Prevarication" (*prevaricazione*) seems to be a mistake. The context suggests "predominance" instead.

language | speech
cinema | films

Appendix

QUIPS ON THE CINEMA *

I am pleased with the title of your magazine and the pleasure consists in perceiving its title as ambiguous and meaningful: cinema and films (or cinema and film?): a contradiction? a dilemma? a hendiadys? Is the "and" conjunctive or adversative? Is there in these two connected words the same value we hear in analogous expressions such as "humanity and men" or "industry and product," or again, "poetry and poems"?

I don't know if it is your intention, but the only way to unravel this ball tangled with disconcerting but satisfying ambiguity and ambivalence is that of returning immediately to the foremost saying of contemporary linguistics: "*Langue e Parole*," in which the "and" is neither conjunctive nor adversative, but, so to speak, distinctive.

We only know various "*paroles*," we do not know "*langue*"; or better, we know "*langue*" through the real experience of various "*paroles*," that is, by deduction. "*Langue*" is therefore an abstraction, but an abstraction which is . . . concrete, from the moment that it became the reality of a code and of a grammar; that is, an object of study, constituted by study. And it is curious because, if, for example, through men we know only very poorly how to constitute the object "humanity," or through poems we can only know very poorly what poetry is—in linguistics the opposite happens; we know much better what "*langue*" is than what the concrete "*paroles*" are! In the latter lingers the mystery of the act of creation, which is translinguistic, and not completely without charisma; while in the "*langue*" everything is coldly defined—even if with enthusiasm—by the organizing intelligence which, where it finds a code to analyze or describe, finds itself in the most typical moment of its function.

In the field of film linguistics reason still has not yet accomplished this work, which it usually finds so pleasurable and so inviting: it has not yet abstracted "cinema" from the various "films." We know "films" (as we know men or poems), but we don't know "cinema" (as we don't know humanity or poetry). Or, if we do know somewhat what cinema is, we know it as the film industry, or as

* *Cinema and Film* (Winter 1966-67) I: 1. [The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

cinema-social phenomenon; that is, as if we knew a "langue" as instrumental fact without knowing what it is.

The studies to know what cinema is are beginning in these years; and it is right that a magazine such as yours poses the question immediately in its title.

QUESTION: Then, so far as you are concerned . . . we are interested in your efforts to define cinema as "langue" . . . but we suspect that your grammar, which identifies the units of second articulation in the real objects of a frame—and which you call "kinemes"—is born of a stylistic necessity. . . .

ANSWER: You're crazy. It's very unpleasant for an author to always find himself considered a "workhorse of style."¹

And that as far as he is concerned everything is reduced to a pawn to understand his stylistic career.

That is inhuman. It is true that in studying an author it will be necessary to find his unity! However, this must not be done in an elementary manner, and with the self-satisfied and conspiratorial air with which a bank employee speaks well or ill of a colleague; with the air, that is, of one who is a competent authority concerning a given "thing" and who always returns—in the gossip of his circle—to the thing that gives him his authority and thus the right to belong to the circle.

In fact, I will tell you to your face: I am deeply offended by the fact that everything I do and say is twisted around to explain my style. It is a way of exorcising me, and perhaps of calling me stupid, a stupid person in life, who is perhaps competent in his work. Therefore it is also a way of excluding me and of silencing me. Unconsciously, it's understood. So let it be very clear that:

My efforts to extract a linguistic concept from the various films—by analogy with what has always been done with "langue" and "paroles"—is absolutely not an extension of my aesthetic activity, that is, of my film "poetics." It is absolutely not that.

The characteristics of my grammatical research on cinema, if anything, have a deep and complex relationship—however real and therefore simplifiable—with my way of seeing reality, with my way of interpreting reality, that is, with my relationship with reality. It is not for nothing that I am a philosopher, but, I must admit, with my own philosophy.

In a title I have defined cinema as the "written language of reality." And I meant that: reality is a cinema in nature (I act out myself for you, you act out yourself for me; I am a shot for Aprà and Aprà is a shot for me: two fixed shots, now that we are sitting, but which can become sequence shots or a pan when we get up and once again resume the round of our actions).² This cinema in nature which reality is is in effect a language ("It is the semiotics of reality that we

must create!”—this is the slogan that I have been yelling within myself, for months); a language similar in some ways to the oral language of men. Cinema is thus—through its reproduction of reality—the written manifestation of reality.

If cinema is thus no more than the written language of reality (which always manifests itself in actions), it means that it is neither arbitrary nor symbolic; and therefore it represents reality through reality. In concrete terms, through the objects of reality that a camera reproduces, moment by moment (hence my linguistic definition of the “kinemes”). And so at this point one can identify the relationship between my grammatical concept of cinema with what is, or at least I believe to be, my philosophy or my way of life—which does not strike me in the final analysis as being other than a hallucinated, infantile, and pragmatic love for reality. It is religious in that in some way it is fused, by analogy, with a sort of immense sexual fetishism. The world does not seem to me to be other than a totality of fathers and mothers, toward whom I feel an absolute rush of feeling, composed of respectful veneration and of the need to violate said respectful veneration through even violent and scandalous desecrations. (Well, these are things that one says in that extraordinary literary genre that an interview is.)

Expressing myself through the language of cinema—which is no more, as I have already said, than the written phase of the language of reality—I constantly remain within the bounds of reality; I do not suspend its continuity through the adoption of that symbolic and arbitrary system which is the system of “lin-signs.” Which, in order to reproduce reality through its evocation, must, by definition, suspend it.

Now Aprà will stand up, will go to the door, will go out, will move away down the corridor, will go down the stairs, will open the gate onto the street, will get into his car, will start the motor, will depart, will go around the church of Saint Peter and Paul, will take the avenue which leads to the Tiber . . . in short, will continue the actions of his life, which will last as long as his life. But there will always be—now we know it—a virtual eye that will follow him; an invisible camera that will not lose one of his actions, even the slightest, and ideally will reproduce them—that is, will write them cinematographically. No matter how infinite and continuous reality is, an ideal camera will always be able to reproduce it in its infinity and continuity. As primordial and archetypal concept, cinema is therefore *a continuous and infinite sequence shot*.

QUESTION: But then, perhaps, we were right. The idea that presides over your literary-cinematographic poetics, that is, your sentimental, religious, and pragmatic love of reality, also presides over your linguistics and grammar of the cinema.

ANSWER: Yes, at this point I accept that all the knots of my unity be tied. But only, precisely, down here, at this level.

In reality, my translation into grammatical terms of this my idea of cinema—which derives from what *I am*—does not mix or confuse itself with my translation of the same idea into expressive and poetic terms (that is, concretely, in my films). The analogy is predicated on deeper levels.

I will try to outline it for you with simple and slightly naive words.

Well, then, at the bottom lies my love for reality, which has already been defined as such repeatedly. Translating such love into linguistic terms, I am brought to assert that cinema is a language that never leaves reality (it is its reproduction!), and therefore is an infinite *sequence shot* (the relationship is the same between oral language and written language). But this *sequence shot* is an unbroken series of shots (on Aprà as he sits there will be a long, motionless shot, on Aprà who stands and goes to the door, a pan, which is, however, an accelerated series of motionless shots, etc.). The moneme of that written language of reality is therefore the one which in technical terms (which are destined to become a copy of film linguistic terms) is called a shot; the shot-moneme is therefore the unit of first articulation. In fact, however, a shot is nothing more than a collage of objects, which, therefore, by analogy with the phonemes that make up the linguistic moneme, I call "kinemes."

My vision of cinema as language is therefore a "diffused" and "continuous" vision, a reproduction of reality as unbroken and fluid as reality. Here, then, my love for reality embraces in an abstract sense all of reality, from top to bottom, from head to toe; it is a declaration of love as an undaunted and theoretical act of faith.

Let us now pass to poetics, to style, to the concrete making of films. In my films the sequence shot is practically absent! It is almost entirely ignored, or it is so brief as to last as long as a single action. It never contains a series of actions. Is there thus a contradiction here with what my primordial and archetypal concept of cinema is, that is, that unbroken sequence shot which I have pushed so strongly inasmuch as it is a reproduction of reality in its extent and in its duration? Certainly there is a contradiction. But contradictions, as you know, are *all* apparent.

In fact, the same rash love of reality, translated into linguistic terms, causes 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.

In short: to conceive of cinema as an infinite and continuous sequence shot is in no way naturalistic. On the contrary! Instead, the concrete sequence shot, in individual films, is a naturalistic technique (of itself: certainly not if corrected by the opposition of other techniques). That is why I avoid the sequence shot: because it is naturalistic and therefore . . . natural. 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.

In my cinema, therefore, the sequence shot is completely substituted by editing. The continuity and linear infinity of that ideal sequence shot which cinema is as the written language of reality becomes a "synthetic" linear continuity and infinity through the intervention of editing.

Now, the difference between cinema and films, all films, consists precisely in this: that cinema has the *analytical* linearity of an infinite and continuous sequence shot—while films have a potentially infinite and continuous but *synthetic* linearity.

There are some authors who try, as a result of their good-natured and naturalistic love of the things of this world, to reproduce in their films the analytical linearity which has to the greatest extent possible the duration of reality; other directors instead favor an editing which renders such linearity as synthetic as possible. (I belong to this last category.)

QUESTION: Cinéma-vérité . . . ?

ANSWER: Cinéma-vérité only gives the illusion of drawing closer than the others to the archetypal notion of cinema as pure reproduction of reality: cinéma-vérité can produce synthetic or montage films neither more nor less than *October* [1927] (that unpleasant film by Eisenstein). Marco Ferreri, so far as I know—in a film which Ponti later reduced to an episode, abjectly manipulating it—tried some sequence shots which had the duration of the analogous real actions. But all this became expressionism! An almost obsessive stylistic intensification! Obviously naturalism is something which runs in our veins, and it blends with an ideology of resigned, kind-hearted, or crepuscular "acceptance."³ Such a serum does not run through the veins of Ferreri, obviously. Thus he reproduces reality in its real duration because of sadism: that is, the real duration of an action, in its reproduction, reveals it to be dependent on chance, that is, on the accidental passage of time—the unreal time in which what is organic wastes away and runs down—the time to which we are accustomed—this time, if reproduced materially but not natu-

ralistically, reveals itself in all its miserable and fearsome horror. Even naturalism is a trick and a manipulation. De Sica is a master in this, both in his good films and in the mediocre ones. . . .

QUESTION: Your idea concerning the "Semiology of Reality" is still buzzing around in our heads. Can you give us a few details?

ANSWER: Ha, ha, ha (*he laughs*). Well. Yes. The title of the book in which I will collect my essays on cinema (they will be extremely contradictory because each one represents one moment of my thought, separate from the following) will perhaps be "*Cinema as Semiology of Reality*." In short, what happened to me is what might happen to an individual who might become involved in research on the functioning of mirrors. He places himself in front of the mirror and observes it, examines it, takes notes; finally what does he see? Himself. What does he notice? His physical and material presence. The study of the mirror brings him fatally back to the study of himself.

This happens to whoever studies cinema. Since cinema reproduces reality, it ends up bringing us back to the study of reality. But in a new and special way, as if reality had been discovered through its reproduction, and as if certain of its expressive mechanisms had been revealed only through this new "reflected" situation.

Cinema, in fact, by reproducing reality gives testimony to its expressiveness, which could have escaped us. In short, it makes a natural semiology.

This is my point of departure.

Let us again consider Aprà.

Aprà is a reality.

Reality is a language.

Aprà therefore speaks, also outside his written-spoken language (his Italian of a film person).

I receive information from Aprà that comes to me directly from Aprà as reality.

There is first of all the language of his physical presence, or physiognomy.

From it I receive information which is psychological in nature, or psychophysical.

Then there is the language of his behavior (how he sits, how he dresses, etc.).

From it I receive information of a social nature.

There is, finally, the language of his language.

From it I receive information of a cultural nature.

Is the *whole* a metonymic or a syntagmatic language?

And the great syntagmatic lapses of the language of reality, might these be the "phenomena"? But at this point let's drop everything until we see each other at Pesaro in '67.

QUESTION: Okay. Tell us, at least, what new feelings you felt and to what updating you felt compelled after reading the latest essays by Metz (in *Cahiers du Cinéma* number 185) and by Barthes (the interview published in the same place).⁴

ANSWER: Metz criticizes in part, in his essay, my concept of the "cinema of poetry," saying that the "cinema of poetry" had already existed at the genesis of film history. But, in the first place, I had not spoken of the "cinema of poetry" as the principal manifestation of modern cinema. Mine was an abstract notion, valid for all times (much as the "language of poetry" is an expression that is equally valid for Greece, the eighteenth century, and us). In the second place, I myself had said that the earliest cinema had been a cinema of poetry. For two reasons: (1) because an industrial film industry which demanded a conventional "narrative" had not taken form other than embryonically; (2) because of the technical restriction of the "silents." The advent of the industrialization of cinema and [the advent] of sound have transformed cinema, in essence, into a "language of prose narrative." (I am not making value judgments.) Now the "cinema of poetry" is on the rise once again, a sign that the industry can find a "second channel" of distribution for the elite; and a sign that a compulsory linguistic unity has been broken, that film language is articulating itself. Therefore new prosodic "restrictions" arise, and new metric licenses to differentiate the different types of cinema.

QUESTION: And as for Barthes?

ANSWER: Oh, his *interview* strikes me as being extraordinary. I would like to linger on it longer, and also go beyond the strictly cinematographic problems (for the rest, I did that for an article, "The End of the Avant-Garde," which is about to appear in *Nuovi Argomenti*, number 3-4).⁵

Here I will only say: yes, it is correct to borrow from Jakobson for linguistic purposes two prosodic or rhetorical concepts, metaphor and metonymy.⁶ (Moreover, I myself, even though Metz reproaches me for it, had already done the same thing in speaking of stylema which become syntagmas, given that the various film "*paroles*" are all born under the sign of prosody or of rhetoric, to be exact; and there are no film "*paroles*" beyond the limits of narrative film, with the exception of documentaries, which always obey prosodico-rhetorical rules.)

Cinema is therefore without a doubt—Barthes is correct, in an enlightening way—a metonymic art. And with good cause: the nature of its language is not predicated on signs but on images—the stylization that leads us to writing as alphabet is not a stylization of signs but of syntagmas, that is, of montage (editing).

But in doing this, Barthes defines cinema as "art," "work of art,"

and in this case, as "narrative art" (in cinema something always happens, he says; there is always a "story"). I don't know if this generalization can be extended to all cinema as language and not as language of art.

If I wanted to bring Barthes's clever intuition back to my theory (so barbarically sketched out), I would say: "*It is not cinema which is a metonymic art, it is reality which is metonymic.*"

The "phenomena" of the world are the natural "syntagmas" of the language of reality. Cinema, "in reproducing such phenomena," that is, in presenting itself as the written language of the living language of reality, is in its turn metonymic.

And its metonymicity is, in the final analysis, no more than the "linearity" with which reality speaks to us. In short, the shots of a film cannot be replaced like the pages of an almanac, because the objects of reality that the succession of shots represents cannot be replaced according to the succession with which they represent themselves naturally to us.

I cannot substitute or remove single shots. I can, however, substitute or remove syntagmas (from sequences), because the conventionality and thus the freedom of cinema are to be found in the editing, not in the single shots. It is in the editing that stylization takes place.

Therefore, while—as I said—the sequence shot of the ideal cinema, which virtually "writes" reality in its uninterrupted and infinite physicality, is linear, editing retains such linearity, but reduces it to segments: that is, it synthesizes it.

In conclusion: today there are many authors who do all they can so that in cinema, too, "nothing happens"; they align themselves, in other words, with the "nouveau roman" and with certain avant-garde movements that speak of the "antinovel," etc., or of a "narrative without narrative," etc. (I don't believe in it: because every form of art and of artistic language does nothing more than evoke reality, and in reality something always happens because time passes, or at least seems to pass; and this is the illusion of our life.) Well, let us admit as a hypothesis that there may be a film where "nothing happens," or at least there may be the least amount of narrative possible (the more acceptable hypothesis). Let us say—to take the example further—a film written in the "language of poetry," a film which is "cinema of poetry" to the highest degree. In the presence of this laboratory example would Barthes's definition of cinema as metonymic art still be valid? A film of poetry could very well play on the potential substitution of the shots (a series of shots juxtaposed according to a lyrical and not a narrative organization; or a series of symbolic shots, each one contained within itself, etc., etc.).

Barthes's definition is therefore splendid, but it serves to define a "cinema of prose narrative" as if this were all cinema, and as if a "film language" did not exist, but as if the only artistic language in existence were the whole of the individual films.

QUESTION: Could you furnish us with some final observations on these clarifications of your essays "The Cinema of Poetry" and "The Written Language of Action"?

ANSWER: A rather mechanical conclusion, a key idea.

Cinema, as the written language of reality, probably has (and this will become increasingly clear in the future) the same revolutionary importance that the invention of "writing" had. The latter "revealed" to man what his oral language is, first of all. Certainly this was the first movement forward in the new human cultural consciousness born of the invention of the alphabet: the awareness of the oral language or, more simply, the awareness of language.

The second revolutionary moment is the one that—in disagreement with Saussure—Benvenuto Terracini describes (*Conflicts of Language and Culture*):⁷ that is, a maturation of the thinking process, which, if it was represented "naturally" in moral language, could only be represented "consciously" in written language. Finally, written language has revealed and accentuated the "linearity" of language (which, in being only spoken, is corrected by intonations and mimicry).

The same revolutionary procedures that written language has produced in regard to spoken language, cinema will produce in regard to reality.

The language of reality, as long as it was natural, was beyond our consciousness: now that it appears "written" through cinema, it cannot fail to demand a consciousness. The written language of reality will cause us first of all to know what the language of reality is, and it will end up finally modifying our idea of it—at least transforming our physical relations with reality into cultural relations.

Barthes, who has so widened the concept of "writing," should be very jealous of my idea of cinema as "writing." I don't know—for example, Barthes contrasts the "linearity" of writing to the "devouring movement" of oral language. Is this a contrast that can also be established between the written language of reality and reality?

Does cinema speak to us according to a linear concentration while reality speaks to us according to a "devouring movement"? Etc., etc. And again: in reality there is no tree—there is, however, the pear tree, and apple tree, the elder tree, the cactus—but there is no tree. Thus cinema will not be able to "reproduce" (write) a tree: it will reproduce a pear tree, an apple tree, an elder tree, a cactus—but not a tree. Exactly as in the primitive cuneiform languages. Therefore,

does the language of cinema, which is the product of a technology which has come to determine a human epoch, precisely because it is a technology, perhaps have some points of contact with the empiricism of the primitives? Etc., etc.

Does writing, along with cinema, therefore lose its "nature as sign" and reacquire its archaic "figural nature"? What relation is there between the empiricism of the cave man, caused by physical necessities, and the empiricism of contemporary man, caused by technologicoproductive necessities?

Does the sign in cinema—the im-sign—reacquire its archaic ability to suggest eidetically through the physical violence of its reproduction of reality?

.....

And, to return to me, is the passing from literary writing to cinema a manifestation of extreme modernity, or of regression? I have said that I make movies in order to live according to my philosophy, that is, the desire to always live physically at the level of reality without the magicosymbolic interruption produced by the system of linguistic signs. But what horrible sins does such a philosophy entail? In its defense I have mentioned "action," "irrationalism," "pragmatism," "religion": all those that I know to be the most negative and dangerous aspects of my civilization. The same aspects, for example, of a certain fascism!! In the valley of Jehoshaphat will I have to give an account of the weakness of my conscience in the presence of the identifiable attractions of technology and mythology?

Notes

1. *Bestia da stile* in analogy with *bestia da soma*, a workhorse or pack animal, thus "workhorse of style," the title of a play Pasolini had written not long before this interview. It has been published in the volume *Porcile, Orgia, Bestia da Stile* (Milan, 1979).

2. Adriano Aprà, the interviewer.

3. See "New Linguistic Questions," n. 6, for a discussion of crepuscularism.

4. Michel Delahaye and Jacques Rivette, "Cinema metaforico e cinema metonimico" ["Metaphoric Cinema and Metonymic Cinema"] (Intervista con Roland Barthes) *Cinema e Film*, 1 (1966-67), 9-14. This is a translation of Barthes's interview of September 1963 in *Cahiers du Cinema*, n. 147, reprinted in Roland Barthes, *Le grain de la voix: Entretiens 1962-1980* (Paris, 1981), pp. 18-29. Metz's essay, largely a response to Pasolini's "The 'Cinema of Poetry,'" has been reprinted in his *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, tome 1 (Paris, 1971), and in English as "The Modern Cinema and Narrativity" in *Film Language* (New York, 1974); see pp. 185-227.

5. See "The End of the Avant-Garde," pp. 121-41.

6. See Introduction, n. 16.

7. *Conflitti di lingue e di cultura* (Venice, 1957).

OBSERVATIONS ON THE SEQUENCE SHOT

Let us look at the 16-mm short that a spectator in the crowd filmed of the death of Kennedy. It is a sequence shot, and it is the most typical sequence shot possible. The spectator-cameraman, in fact, did not choose any visual angles; he simply filmed from where he was, framing what his eye saw—better than the lens. Therefore the typical sequence shot is a "subjective."

In the possible film on the death of Kennedy all the other visual angles are missing: from that of Kennedy himself, to that of Jacqueline, from that of the assassin who was shooting, to that of his accomplices, from that of others present who were located at more fortunate vantage points, to that of the police escort, etc.

Supposing that we had some short films shot from all those visual angles, what would we have? A series of sequence shots which would reproduce the real things and actions of that hour, seen contemporaneously from various visual angles: seen, that is, through a series of "subjectives." The subjective is therefore the realistic boundary of every audiovisual technique. It is not conceivable to "see and hear" reality in its development, *if not from a single visual angle*: and this visual angle is always that of a subject who sees and hears. This subject is a flesh and blood subject, because even if we, in a fictional film, choose an ideal point of view, and one which is therefore in a certain sense abstract and not naturalistic, it becomes realistic and, in extreme cases, naturalistic in the moment in which we place a camera and a recorder at that point of view: it will come out as something seen and heard by a subject in flesh and blood (that is, with eyes and ears).

Now, the reality seen and heard as it happens *is always in the present*.

The time of a sequence shot, understood as a schematic and primordial element of cinema—that is, as an infinite subjective—is therefore the present. Cinema, consequently, "reproduces the present." The "live transmission" of television is a paradigmatic reproduction of the present of something that happens.

Let us therefore suppose that we not only have a short on the death of Kennedy, but a dozen analogous shorts, that is, sequence shots that subjectively reproduce the present of the death of the President. In the very moment in which we, even for purely documentary reasons (for example, in a projection room of the police

who are conducting an investigation), see all these subjective sequence shots one after the other, that is, we add them together even if not physically, what do we do? We make a sort of montage, albeit an extremely elementary one. And what do we obtain from this montage? We obtain a *multiplication of "presents,"* as if an action, instead of unfolding only once before our eyes, unfolded more times. This multiplication of "presents" in reality abolishes the present; it renders it useless, each of those presents postulating the relativity of the other, its unreliability, its lack of precision, its ambiguity.

Studying for a police investigation, which is the least interested in any aesthetic consideration, and is instead very interested in the documentary value of the shorts projected as eyewitnesses of a real event to be reconstructed exactly, the first question that we would ask ourselves is the following: which of these shorts represents with greater approximation the real reality of the facts? There are many poor eyes and ears (or cameras and recorders) in front of which an irreversible chapter of reality has passed, presenting itself in a different manner to each pair of these natural organs or these technical instruments (shot, reverse angle shot, master shot, extreme close-up, close-up, and all the possible camera angles); now, every one of these ways in which reality has presented itself is extremely poor, aleatory, almost pitiful, if we consider that *it is only one*, and that the others are many, an infinity.

In any case, it is clear that reality, with all its faces, has expressed itself; it has said something to those who were present (were present as participants, BECAUSE REALITY SPEAKS ONLY WITH ITSELF). It has said something in its language, which is the language of action (integrated into the symbolic and conventional human languages): a gunshot, more gunshots, a collapsing body, a stopping car, a screaming woman, many screaming people. . . . All these *nonsymbolic signs* say that something has happened: the death of a president, here and now, in the present. And this present is, I repeat, the time of the various subjectives as sequence shots, shot from the various visual angles in which fate placed the witnesses with their inadequate natural organs or technical instruments.

The language of action is therefore the language of the nonsymbolic signs of the present, and yet in the present it has no meaning, or if it has, it has it subjectively, that is, in an incomplete, uncertain, and mysterious sense. *By dying Kennedy expressed himself with his last action:* by collapsing and dying on the seat of a black presidential automobile in the weak arms of a petit-bourgeois American.

But this extreme language of action with which Kennedy expressed himself in the presence of various spectators remains in the present, in which it is perceived by the senses and filmed, which is the same thing—suspended and unrelated. Like every moment of

the language of action it *is a search*. A search for what? For a placement in relation to itself and to the objective world; and therefore a research of relations with all the other languages of action with which others, together with it, express themselves. In this example the last *living syntagmas* of Kennedy were searching for a relationship with the living syntagmas of those who in that moment were expressing themselves by living around him. For example, those of his assassin, or assassins, who was or were shooting.

Until such living syntagmas have been placed in a relationship among themselves, both the language of Kennedy's last action and the language of the assassins are maimed, incomplete languages, practically incomprehensible. What, therefore, must happen so that they become complete and comprehensible? That the relationships that each of them is looking for, almost groping and stuttering, be established. But not through a simple multiplication of presents—as would be realized if we were to juxtapose the various subjectives, but through their coordination. Their coordination in fact is not limited, like juxtaposition, to destroying and rendering vain the concept of the present (as in the hypothetical projection of the various shorts, screened one after the other in the projection room of the FBI), *but to render the present past*.

Only the events which have taken place and are finished can be coordinated among themselves and thus acquire a meaning (as I will explain perhaps better further on).

Now let us make another assumption: that among the investigators who have seen the various and regrettably hypothetical shorts, attached one to the other, there is a clever analytical mind.

His cleverness could therefore only consist in coordination. Intuited the truth, from a careful analysis of the various naturalistic segments composed of the various shorts, would his cleverness be capable of reconstructing it, and how? By choosing the truly meaningful moments of the various subjective sequence shots and consequently finding their real ordering. In other words, it would be a montage. After this work of choice and coordination, the various visual angles would be dissolved, and the existential subjectivity would give way to objectivity; there would no longer be the pitiful pairs of eyes-ears (or cameras-recorders) to capture and reproduce the escaping and so scarcely cordial reality, but in their place there would be a narrator. This narrator transforms the present into the past.

Hence it follows that: cinema (or more accurately, the audiovisual technique) is in essence an infinite sequence shot, precisely as reality is to our eyes and ears, for all the time during which we are able to see or to hear (an infinite subjective sequence shot that finishes with the end of our life); and this sequence shot, then, is

nothing more than the reproduction (as I have repeatedly stated) of the language of reality; in other words, it is the reproduction of the present.

But from the moment in which editing enters the picture, that is, when we pass from the cinema to a film (which are therefore two very different things as "*langue*" is different from "*parole*"), it happens that the present becomes past (that is, coordinations among the various living languages have taken place); a past that, for reasons immanent in the cinematographic medium, and not because of an aesthetic choice, always has the qualities of the present (*it is, in other words, a historical present*).

At this point, then, I must say what I think of death (and I leave readers free to ask themselves, skeptically, what all this has to do with cinema). I have said repeatedly, and always poorly, regrettably, that reality has its own language—more specifically, it is a language—which, to be described, requires a "General Semiology," which for the time being doesn't exist, even as a concept (semiotologists always observe distinct and well-defined objects, that is, the various existing languages, be they of signs or not; they have not yet discovered that semiology is the descriptive science of reality).

Such a language—I have stated, and always poorly—coincides, insofar as man is concerned, with human action. Man, that is, expresses himself primarily by his action—not understood in a merely pragmatic sense—because it is with it that he modifies reality and engraves it on the soul. But this action lacks unity, that is, meaning, *until it has been completed*. So long as Lenin lived, the language of his action was still undecipherable, in part because it was still possible and therefore modifiable by eventual future actions. In a word, so long as he has a future, that is, an unknown quantity, man is unexpressed. There may be an honest man who, at sixty years of age, commits a crime; such a blameworthy action modifies all his past actions, and therefore he appears as something different from what he had always been. Until I die no one can guarantee to really know me, that is, to be able to give a meaning to my action, which therefore, as a linguistic moment, can be deciphered only with difficulty.

It is therefore absolutely necessary to die, *because, so long as we live, we have no meaning*, and the language of our lives (with which we express ourselves, and to which we therefore attribute the greatest importance) is untranslatable; a chaos of possibilities, a search for relations and meanings without resolution. *Death effects an instantaneous montage of our lives*; that is, it chooses the truly meaningful moments (which are no longer modifiable by other possible contrary or incoherent moments) and puts them in a sequence, transforming an infinite, unstable, and uncertain—and

therefore linguistically not describable—present into a clear, stable, certain, and therefore easily describable past (exactly in the context of a General Semiology). *It is only thanks to death that our life serves us to express ourselves.*

Editing therefore performs on the material of the film (which is composed of fragments that can be extremely long or infinitesimal, of many sequence shots understood as possible infinite subjective shots) the operations that death performs on life.

(1967)

Cinema could be defined as "word without language"; in fact, the various films, to be understood, do not refer to cinema, but to reality itself. By this I mean to postulate my usual identification of cinema with reality, and it is understood that the semiology of cinema should be no more than a chapter of the General Semiology of reality.

Let us consider: in a film a shot appears of a boy with black curly hair and black laughing eyes, a face covered with acne, a slightly swollen throat, like that of someone hyperthyroidal, and an amusing, festive expression which emanates from his entire being. Does this shot of a film perhaps refer to a social pact made of symbols, which cinema would be if defined by analogy to "langue"? Yes, it does refer to this social pact, but this social pact, *not being symbolic, cannot be distinguished from reality*, that is, from the real Ninetto Davoli in flesh and blood reproduced in that shot.

We therefore already have in our heads a sort of "Code of Reality" (that is, that potential General Semiology of which I speak so much). It is through this unexpressed and unconscious code that we are made to understand reality, that we also understand the various films. In fact, to tell it like it is in the simplest and most elementary manner, in films we recognize reality, which expresses itself to us in them as it ordinarily does in life.

A character in cinema, as in every moment of reality, talks to us through signs or *living syntagmas* of his action, which, subdivided into chapters, could be: (1) the language of physical presence; (2) the language of behavior; (3) the language of written-spoken language—all, exactly, synthesized by the language of action, which establishes relations with us and with the objective world. In a General Semiology of reality each one of these chapters should then naturally be subdivided into an undefined number of paragraphs. It is a project which has been on the tip of my pen for some time now; here I would like to limit myself to observing how the second paragraph, the one entitled "The Language of Behavior," should certainly be the most interesting and the most complex. Meanwhile, and first of all, it should be subdivided into two subparagraphs, and that is "the language of general behavior" (which would synthesize all the ways of being learned through education in a codifying society), and "the

language of specific behavior" (which would serve to express oneself in particular social situations and in given slangy moments of those situations).

Let's take, for example, the actor with the curly hair and the acne of whom I was speaking earlier; the 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. The language of the world is, in short, essentially a spectacle. In the case of a brawl the curly-headed boy who we have used as an example would not transgress against a single one of the actions required by the popular code: from the first sallies of talk, uttered with the slightly bewildered expression of one who doesn't hear well, to the first almost compassionate threats, to the first shoves against the chest of the adversary with both hands open with the palms forward, etc., etc.

From the various living ceremonial acts of the language of specific behavior we come, imperceptibly, to the various conscious ceremonial acts; from the archaic magic ones to those established by the norms of good behavior of contemporary bourgeois culture. Until finally, and always imperceptibly, reaching *the various symbolic but not sign-dependent languages of humanity*: the languages in which man, to express himself, uses his own body, his own form. Religious representations, mimes, dances, theatrical productions belong to THESE TYPES OF REPRESENTATIONAL, LIVING LANGUAGES. And so, too, cinema.

Until I sketch at least some notes of this "General Semiology" of mine, I would like to limit myself once again to observing how said General Semiology would be at once the Semiology of the Language of Reality and the Semiology of the Language of Cinema. Taking into account only one additional factor: audiovisual reproduction. On the means of such a reproduction, which re-creates in cinema the same linguistic characteristics of life understood as language, one could establish and develop a grammar of cinema. And, on other occasions, I have concerned myself precisely with this. Here it is important to me to observe—and it is the central point of these pages of mine—that if, speaking semiologically, there is no difference between time in life and time in cinema understood as a reproduction of life—inasmuch as it is an infinite sequence shot of

language of the world → spectacle

life—there is instead a substantial difference between time in life and time in the various films.

Let us consider a pure sequence shot: that is, the audiovisual reproduction, taken from a subjective point of view, of a fragment of the infinite succession of things and actions which I could potentially reproduce. Such a pure sequence shot would be constituted by an extraordinarily boring succession of insignificant things and actions. What happens to me and appears before me *in five minutes* of my life would become, when projected on a screen, something absolutely without interest, completely irrelevant. This does not occur in reality, because my body is living and those *five minutes* are *five minutes* of vital soliloquy by reality with itself.

The hypothetical pure sequence shot thus reveals, by representing it, the insignificance of life as life. But through this hypothetical pure sequence shot I also come to know—with the same precision of laboratory experiments—that the fundamental proposition that something insignificant expresses is “I am,” or “there is,” or simply “to be.” But is being natural? No, I don’t think so; on the contrary, it seems to me miraculous, mysterious, and—if anything—absolutely unnatural.

Now, the sequence shot, given the characteristics that I have described, becomes, in fiction films, the most “naturalistic” moment of the film narrative. A man slaps a woman and then gets into an automobile and goes off on the Autostrada del Mare.¹ Well, I place the camera with a microphone where it could be a miserably naturalistic flesh-and-blood witness, and then I shoot the entire scene without cuts, as seen and heard by it, until the car disappears toward Ostia. It’s true: as in the nasty little incident that takes place before my eyes in reality, so in its reproduction, the fundamental and dominant proposition is: “All this is.” (Nevertheless, as I am not indifferent in reality, so, potentially, I am not indifferent to the reproduction of reality. And because in the film I judge reality through the code of reality, I reproduce in myself more or less the same feelings I would experience if I were living those events physically.)

Because cinema will never be able to do without such sequence shots, however brief they may be, given that they are always reproductions of reality, it is accused of naturalism. But the fear of naturalism (at least in cinema) is a fear of being. That is, in the final analysis a fear of the absence of the natural quality of being: of the terrible ambiguity of reality which results from the fact that it is predicated on a misunderstanding: the passage of time. Some naturalism! To make films is to write on burning paper.

To understand what naturalism in cinema is, let us consider an extreme case—which presents itself, or is presented, as an example

of avant-garde cinema: in the basements of the New York of the New Cinema,* sequence shots which last for hours are shown (for example, a man sleeping).² This, then, is cinema in its pure state (as I have repeatedly said), and as such, as representation of reality from a single visual angle, it is subjective in an insanely naturalistic way: primarily inasmuch as it also has the natural time of reality. As always, culturally, the new cinema is an extreme consequence of neorealism with its cult of the real and of the documented. But while neorealism cultivated its cult of reality with optimism, common sense, and good nature—with the consequent sequence shots—the new cinema turns things upside down: in its intensified cult of reality and in its interminable sequence shots, rather than having as fundamental proposition "that which is insignificant is," it has as fundamental proposition "that which is insignificant." But such insignificance is felt with such anger and pain as to attack the spectator and with him his idea of order and his human existential love for what is. The brief, commonsensical, measured, natural, affable sequence shot of neorealism gives us the pleasure of recognizing the reality we live and enjoy daily through an aesthetic comparison with academic conventions; the long, foolish, inordinate, unnatural, mute sequence shot of the new cinema, on the contrary, generates in us a horror of reality, through the aesthetic comparison with neorealist naturalism understood as a school for life.

In practical terms, therefore, the question of the difference between real life and reproduced life, that is, between reality and cinema, is a question, as I was saying, of temporal rhythm. But it is temporal differences that distinguish one film from another. The length of a shot, or the rhythm and succession of shots, changes the value of the film: it causes it to belong to one school rather than to another, to one period rather than to another, to one ideology rather than to another.

Furthermore, if one takes into account that in fiction films one can also create the illusion of the sequence shot through editing, the value of the sequence shot becomes even more ideal: it becomes the actual choice of a world. In fact, while the real sequence shot reproduces a real action as it is, and has its same time span, a *false* sequence shot *imitates* the corresponding real action, reproducing various aspects of it, and then stitching them back together through a temporality which falsifies them by feigning naturalness (which is what occurs in the majority of instances in neorealist cinema, but also in that of conventional commercial illustrative naturalistic cinema).

*Pasolini uses the English term "New Cinema" here.—Ed.

The editing of the new cinema, instead, has as its first characteristic that of showing, openly, the falsification of real time (or in the case of the eternal sequence shots of which I spoke earlier, its intensification through the overturning of the value of the insignificant).

Are the authors of the new cinema correct? That is, should real time be destroyed completely in a work, and should such a destruction be the first and most obvious element of its style? Therefore completely taking away from the spectator the illusion of the development of the actions in time—as used to occur in past and recent narratives?

In my opinion the authors of the new cinema do not die enough in their works: they fidget in them, they writhe in them, or, better still, they agonize in them, but they do not die in them; therefore, their works remain as witnesses to a suffering of the absurd phenomenon of time and, in this sense, they can only be interpreted as an act of life. In the final analysis the fear of naturalism keeps one within the limits of the document, and subjectivity carried to the point of producing either endless sequence shots which horrify the spectator with the irrelevance of *his reality*, or a work of editing which subverts the illusion of the development of time, always [subverting] *his reality*, finishes by becoming the mere subjectivity of psychological documents.³ A certain reality, or reality itself, is evoked from even the most avant-garde and apparently undecipherable literary page. One cannot escape reality, because it speaks with* itself, and we are in its circle. From an unreadable avant-garde page—as from a film sequence which intensifies temporality to such a degree as to deprive us of any illusion of reliving reality through it—there is always a reality that manifests itself; and it is that of the author, who, through his text, expresses his psychological misery, his literary reckonings, his noble or ignoble petit-bourgeois neuroses, etc.

I must repeat that a life, with all its actions, can be completely and truly deciphered only after death; at that point its rhythm is compressed and the insignificant is eliminated. Its fundamental proposition thus is no longer simply "to be," and its naturalness then becomes both a false target and a false ideal. Those who make a sequence shot to reveal the horror of the meaninglessness of life commit an error comparable to and opposite to that of those who make a sequence shot to show the poetry of the insignificant. The continuum of life, in the moment of death—that is, after the editing operation—loses all the endlessness of the times in which, living, we bask, delighting in the perfect correspondence of our physical life—which brings us to consummation—with the passage of time:

*By means of.—Ed.

there isn't one instant in which this correspondence is not perfect. After death, this continuity of life is no longer there, but *there is its meaning*.

Either be immortal and unexpressed or express oneself and die.

The difference between cinema and life is thus negligible, and the same General Semiology which describes life can also describe, I repeat once again, cinema. Therefore, while an action that takes place in life—for example, I who speak here—has as significance its meaning, which can only be truly deciphered after death, an action which takes place in cinema has as significance the significance of the same action which happens in real life, and therefore has its meaning only indirectly (a meaning that also in this case can be truly deciphered only after death). But, as opposed to life and to cinema, an action in film—or an illustrative sign, or an expressive device, or a reproduced living syntagma—use the definition you prefer—has as meaning the meaning of the analogous real action performed by those persons in flesh and blood, in that same social and natural milieu, but its meaning is already completed and decipherable, as if death had already occurred. This means that in cinema time is complete, even if only through a pretense. Therefore, one must necessarily accept the story. Time in this context is not that of life when it lives, but of life after death; as such it is real, it is not an illusion, and it can very well be that of the story of a film.

(1967)

Notes

1. The highway between Rome and Ostia, the beach of Rome.
2. This is probably a reference to Andy Warhol's first serious film, *Sleep* (1963), six hours of a man sleeping.
3. In this confusing sentence Pasolini seems to mean that the spectator's sense of reality is undermined by two forms of subjectivity on the filmmaker's part: endless sequence shots and atemporal editing. The end product is merely psychological evidence about the filmmaker; it does not transcend "the document," i.e., data about the filmmaker's own psyche.

Appendices

THE FEAR OF NATURALISM*

Everyone argues that cinema is essentially naturalistic.¹

In fact I dare to say: "If through film language I want to express a porter, I get a real porter and I reproduce him: body and voice."

And then Moravia laughs and says: "See, cinema is naturalistic, as you see. It is naturalistic, it is naturalistic! But cinema is imagery. And only by representing a mute porter can you make cinema which is in some way not naturalistic."

"Not at all," I say. "Cinema is, 'semiologically,' an audiovisual technique. Therefore a real porter, in flesh and blood and voice."

"Ha, ha, neorealism!" Moravia says.

"Yes, I, when making cinema—*not* a film of mine—making cinema, if I must express a porter, I express him by taking a real porter, with his face, his flesh, and the language with which he expresses himself."

"Ah no, here you are wrong." It is Bernardo Bertolucci who speaks: "Why must one make a porter say what he, the porter, would say? One must take his mouth, but in his mouth we must put philosophical words (as Godard does, naturally)."²

Here the discussion ends because no one will ever be able to get out of Moravia's head the idea that "cinema is imagery" and that at the same time it is, intrinsically, naturalistic; and no one will ever be able to get out of Bernardo Bertolucci's head the idea that porters should speak as philosophers.

But let us assume that the spectator sees a mute porter, the porter of a film. A mute porter, marvelously photographed; an image, therefore. Why does the spectator recognize him? Because he is a porter in reality. In *that* film he may be what you will, but *in cinema* he is the same as in reality. Reproduced. To express him as an image, granted, it is he himself whom I use.

Now, then, let us assume that that porter speaks like Hegel. Well, he is a porter who speaks like Hegel. Why? In reality—albeit in a strange manifestation of reality—couldn't there be a porter who speaks like Hegel? Therefore a porter who says "*li mortacci tua*"³ and a porter who says "thesis and antithesis" are then both charac-

*The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.—Ed.

ters of reality which cinema reproduces as they are. In this sense cinema is fatally naturalistic.

But why, why such fear of naturalism? What does this fear hide? Does it perhaps hide the fear of reality? And is it not bourgeois intellectuals who are afraid of reality?

By reality I mean the physical and social world in which we live, whatever it may be. Whoever expresses himself, through whatever system of signs, however, cannot interpret the reality to be evoked (*either through sign symbols or through illustrative symbols*) other than historically, and therefore realistically.

The mute porter, as pure image, what is he? He is the aesthetic idea that a bourgeois has of a porter, who has nothing in common with that porter. Conversely, the porter who speaks of dialectics is apocryphal and a pretext; he, too, is at the service of a bourgeois who has little in common with him. That is, between a bourgeois and a porter there can only be a tie of human sympathy, that is to say, canine sympathy. We bourgeois are all racists. Now, I don't wish to be such. And I want the porter to be a porter; that is, I want him to be neither an image which pleases me nor the spokesman of my philosophy.

The porter of *cinema* is the same porter of reality, then, and because cinema is an audiovisual technique, the porter of cinema appears and speaks as in reality.

But the porter of a film? Cinema is an infinite sequence shot—I have already said dozens of times—it is the ideal and virtual, infinite reproduction made possible by an invisible camera which reproduces as such all the gestures, the actions, the words of a man from his birth to his death.

The porter of a film—as opposed to the porter of *cinema*, who is a living porter—is a dead porter. No sooner has one died, in fact, than a rapid synthesis of his barely finished life takes place. Billions of actions, expressions, sounds, voices, words vanish and a few dozens or hundreds survive. An enormous number of sentences which he has said every morning, noon, evening, and night of his life fall into an infinite, silent abyss. But some of these sentences survive, as if miraculously, and are recorded in the memory as epigraphs, and remain suspended in the light of a morning, in the sweet darkness of an evening; the wife or friends in remembering them cry. In a film these are the sentences that remain. Is it naturalistic to choose a porter in flesh and blood, real as any one of us is real in this moment as we live, with his words, his language, his pronunciation, but *choosing* one of those sentences which, by chance, were foregrounded, in some way escaped the disaster, or touched our hearts?

Notes

1. The other parties in the discussion that follows, Alberto Moravia and Bernardo Bertolucci, were both friends of Pasolini. Moravia had been the literary mentor of the younger novelist when he first came to Rome; Bertolucci served an apprenticeship to Pasolini in film before becoming a director.

2. See "The 'Cinema of Poetry,'" pp. 181-83, for Pasolini's discussion of Godard.

3. *Li mortacci tua* is an untranslatable offensive expression meaning, literally, "your ugly dead relatives."

The purest language in the world, in fact the only one which could be called LANGUAGE and that's all, is the language of natural reality.

For example, the one of the rows of poplars, of the green fields, and of the Lambro, which "spoke" to me near Milan in the last scenes of Oedipus.¹ Or the row of small trees on the city street, as full of cars as a garage, which the printer of *Rinascita* or of *Contemporaneo* has before his eyes.²

Naturally the LANGUAGE of these places, of these natural "particulars," is enormously contaminated³ by a series of languages that we might define as "integrating" (for example, my Italian, through which I translate my perception of the natural being of these aspects of nature. I have already written and rewritten this. Reality doesn't do anything else but speak with itself using human experience as a vehicle. God, as all religions state, created man to speak with Himself). The thousands of integrating languages (and in first place the written-spoken languages) have been analyzed and studied for a long time now, first by the grammarians, and now, with an almost limitless expanse of horizon, by the semiologists. But—as I have already repeated many times—the semiologists have, up until now, focused their research on the various languages (composed of arbitrary signs or iconic signs, symbolic or living) that make up that whole which in the final analysis is the "Language of Reality." In a paper I presented at Pesaro I made this observation hesitantly because I did not feel I could swear that my information was complete and current, but the specialists present there reassured me.⁴ No, Semiology, it is true, has taken into consideration the most improbable aspects of the language of Reality, but never Reality itself as language. Semiology, that is (and perhaps fortunately), has not yet taken the step which would lead it to become a Philosophy in that it is a description of Reality as language.

This, Christian Metz told me, is a dream of mine. An Italian linguist would tell me that it is a foolishness of mine. In conclusion I find myself isolated and a bit crazy.

Accordingly, the only language that could be defined as LANGUAGE and only that is that of natural reality. And that of human reality in

* *Rinascita*, n. 33 (August 25, 1967). [The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

the moment in which it is not simply natural, but historical? That is: while a poplar speaks a pure language, do I, Pier Paolo Pasolini, speak (while remaining silent, with my being, my face, my action(s) spread out over all the instants, the days, the years, and the decades of my life), do I speak a pure language? Obviously not. This pure language is contaminated in the first place by the first social contract, that is, by language, first in its spoken, then written form; and then, by all the infinite nonarbitrary languages which I experience as a result of my birth, my economic condition, my education—society and the historical moment in which I live.

A synthesis of all these integrating languages united with the PURE LANGUAGE of my natural presence as living being (like a poplar) is the language of my human reality, which is therefore primarily an EXAMPLE.

By living, every one of us (willing or not) performs a moral action whose meaning is suspended.

Hence the reason for death. If we were immortal, we would be immoral, because our example would never have an end; therefore, it would be undecipherable, eternally suspended and ambiguous.

Let's assume that Stalin were still alive: wouldn't Marxism, which has made a virtually absolute public example of his image, still be suspended and ambiguous in a lie which was unmasked only with the end of Stalin? In the case of Stalin the Twentieth Congress was necessary (and was not sufficient). In a more humble instance a "small tear" is enough (in "at the bridgehead by Benevento").⁵

Let us observe this little tear for an instant. Until that instant the man from whose eyelash that stunted and sublime little tear fell was a sinner; his had been an example of (generic and catholic) evil. That small tear turned his life upside down; it cast a completely different light upon his life: the evil has become not evil, the contrary of good, a will to be good, an unexpressed good, a rage at not being good, an inability to not want the good, an aberrant and yet divine form of the good.

If he had never died, that small tear would never have been, and the language of his human action, of his being as a man on earth, would have been an unfinished example of evil and that's all.

Therefore, notwithstanding this last Dantesque example, my idea of death is neither Catholic nor idealistic; at least in this phase of my discussion (which is a grammatical and semiological discussion of cinema). And I say it here, now, because this is an appendix to that paper presented at Pesaro to which I alluded. And objections were raised in that very context concerning the spiritualistic danger of that idea of mine about death, etc., etc.

Either express oneself and die, or remain unexpressed and immortal, I said.

But my idea of death, then, was a behavioral and moral idea; it was not concerned with the aftermath of death, but with the premise of it—not with the beyond, but with life. With life, then, understood as a fulfillment, as a desperate, uncertain search for its expressive perfection, constantly seeking supports, opportunities, and relationships. I think it would be difficult to be more secular than that. And I believe that to base an idea of life on a death understood in this sense is in no way contradictory to declaring oneself a Marxist. Or should the “second” philosophy of Marxism continue to be the old positivism, which is so likeable and so yellowed? It seems that all agree that it should not. And that, on the contrary, the foremost problem of these otherwise miserable and fleeting sixties is that of finding new philosophical integrations for Marxism as it has been left by Stalin and the Twentieth Congress, battered and almost in agony.

Among the various errors made by some official Marxist intellectuals one must by now list that attempt of an opening toward the Right, on the borderline with the avant-garde. But it is an error which is as old as the avant-garde itself, and it is no longer important to speak of it.

In this context I would instead like to add something to my Pesaro paper, so hurriedly jotted down and read.

I wanted to reiterate this fact first of all: cinema is the most essentially ambiguous thing one can imagine. This is why: cinema is an infinite sequence shot which expresses reality with reality. In front of each of us there is always an eventual and virtual camera with an inexhaustible base that “shoots” our life from our birth to our death. Because our FIRST AND PURE language is our presence, reality in reality. Therefore, all of Manfred’s life until the tears near the bridge near Benevento has been shot, and so has all of Stalin’s life until his death without tears, much more similar to that of Pope Pius XII than to that of Manfred (perhaps with a documentary appendix on Khrushchev’s revelations). As such, the language of cinema is the most naturalistic thing one can imagine—given that theoretically it expresses reality with reality, *incessantly, that is, following the same time of reality* (an infinite sequence shot; or at least as long as the entire existence of a man, of a poplar, of an event of reality). So naturalistic that—as I have already said many times—the General Semiology of Reality (which is my dream) and the Semiology of the Cinema would be in the final analysis almost the same science.

The same unexpressed and unconscious Code of Reality which every one of us has within himself and which causes him to recognize reality (for example, what a face seen for an instant in the street tells us) is the same one that causes him to recognize reality in

cinema (the same "reproduced" face of someone passing down the street).

But what is it that makes reality "naturalistic" and therefore unreal? It is time. In this sense cinema is no longer naturalistic, because NEVER, IN PRACTICE, THAT IS, IN THE VARIOUS FILMS, is its time that of reality. That is, it is not unreal, as is reality, which is founded on an illusion: that is, on the passing of something that doesn't exist, that is, time. Cinema, on the contrary, is founded on the abolition of time as continuity, and therefore on its transformation into a meaningful and moral reality, always (even in commercial films, in which meaning and morality have naturally degenerated).

Cinema, in actuality, is like a life after death. While Stalin lived he found himself in a *continuum*—undecipherable, approximate, mythical, and at the same time violently physical, ambiguous, and mendacious. After his death, this *continuum* was focused outside of time, on a fixed series of moral acts; that is, those which the Communists euphemistically and typically call the "crimes" of Stalin.

Editing is thus very similar to the choice which death makes of the acts of a life, placing them outside of time.

I have said—yes, once again many times, but always hurriedly—that Cinema is similar to "*Lingue*" while Films correspond to "*Paroles*"; in a strictly Saussurean context this means that only Films (as only *Paroles*) exist in practice and concretely, while Cinema (as *Lingue*) does not exist; it is simply an abstract and normalizing deduction which has its point of departure in infinite films (understood as *Paroles*).

Now—and here is the new idea, which is the reason I wrote this note—while the *Lingue* deduced by abstraction from *Paroles* is always a linguistic event, even if it exists as pure hypothesis and eventual codification, *Cinema deduced from the various Films is no longer a cinematographic event*. THE LANGUAGE OF FILMS (THAT IS, CINEMA) IS REALITY ITSELF!

Let us take Rimbaud, opening at random to "*Les Chercheuses de Poux*": these are words of a stylistic system (even if it's a simple question of a title) which we recognize through the cognitive code which we have of that written-spoken "*Lingue*" which is French, but if we see in the sublime *Man of Aran* a woman and a boy on the rocks, we recognize them because the cognitive code of reality as such comes into play.⁶

Let us therefore add new clarification to our semiological ravings: Cinema as *Lingue* is reality itself which is represented.

The New American Cinema—for which I had so much respect previously, given my love for the New Left—seen here in Rome, has

disappointed me very much. In the best of cases—I would say Burt Kagle⁷—it is valid if seen within a limited context of historical reality, that which is typical of New York—which, it is true, all things considered, is at the center of the world. In the worst of cases—I won't mention them by name—it is a cinema for convent schoolgirls. But, above and beyond this value judgment of mine, which can certainly be wrong, I would like to point out that the idea through which the authors of the New Cinema delude themselves into thinking that they are destroying conventional time is all a misunderstanding. First of all, they think that they can make the essential nonnaturalism of cinema coincide with the conventionality of the editing of Hollywood's commercial film [industry]; doing this they render their polemical objective partial and secondary. The nonnaturalism of time in cinema is instead essential in all possible films. In the second place, they make the erroneous idea of time of a petit bourgeois coincide with the erroneous idea of time of all of humanity; and here too they are wrong, because even the most cretinous and nazified of the petit bourgeois, founding his life on the illusion of the passing of time, does something which is moving and sublime, like Einstein himself. In the third place, the idea of time which they oppose to what they consider to be conventional is an idea which is taken too generically from the Indian philosophies made fashionable by Ginsberg, and the result is that they arbitrarily and amateurishly capsize time, making films that seem like calendars whose pages are rapidly passed under one's thumb—one glimpses blue skies with black, chopped-off branches, New York under the snow, a good Negro who goes down into the subway, girls who dance dances which go out of style in a month, etc., etc. In other words, they arbitrarily try to violate those "living syntagmas" which, as represented by reality, are the iconic language with which reality expresses itself: but they violate them, as in all avant-garde movements which proclaim themselves to be such, as poets who do not live, rendered dead by the idea of being poets.

I was saying earlier that death effects a rapid synthesis of a past life, and the retroactive light that it shines on that life highlights its essential moments, making of them actions which are mythical or moral outside of time. Well, this is the way in which *a life becomes a story*.

As for me, I continue to believe in a cinema which narrates, that is, in the convention through which the editing chooses the meaningful and valid parts from the infinite sequence shots which can be shot. But I have also been the first to speak explicitly of a "cinema of poetry." However, speaking of a cinema of poetry, I always meant to speak of narrative poetry. The difference was a technical one: rather than the narrative technique of the novel, of Flaubert or of Joyce, the narrative technique of poetry. Observe the montage of *Man of Aran*.

Here you will have an idea of editing bent to a new narrative technique of the cinema of poetry; be it a Hesiodic poetry, as the hagiographers state. Also Godard's stories of Parisian interiors, bedrooms or bars, are edited with a narrative technique typical of poetry.⁸ Naturally it would be senseless to search for precise and codifiable limits between a given cinema of prose and a given cinema of poetry. . . .

Now, what I ask myself, after the mistaken experiments of the avant-garde, is if a *cinema of nonnarrative poetry* isn't possible—of poetry-poetry, or, as it's usually called, of lyric poetry. Is it possible?

On this question I close this note, but not without first having tried to define the real terms of the problem. It is not possible to make cinema of poetry (alas, let's call it thus) lyrical simply by intensifying the technique of the cinema of narrative poetry. Intensifying Cassavetes or Godard, one makes bad Cassavetes or four-day Godard.* What we can ask ourselves is this. At times reality itself is poetic. The other evening we were talking about these things in an open-air restaurant, with Moravia and other friends, when a mandolin player arrived (not seen, on the sly) and began to play his mandolin. Well, it was such a poetic thing that everyone in his heart felt lost and had to force the emotion back into himself, to intellectualize it and express it. In that moment reality as nonarbitrary language—that is, a mandolin player as an iconic symbol of himself—that is, once again, a mandolin tune as living syntagma—was poetic. Would capturing moments such as this, by reproducing them, be the lyric poetry of cinema? But in this case, once again, how would the Semiology of Reality be identified with that of Cinema (in fact, as we have seen, Cinema as Langue is nothing more than reality itself), so is the poetry of reality one and the same thing as that reproduced by cinema? But wasn't the mandolin player in time—in the time of an open-air dinner—and therefore in a real time, in the illusion of real time, in a life that already had the characteristics of a story?

In Montreal, I read, one sees new technical film experiments. Perhaps that is the road to the cinema of poetry-poetry? But, how horrible. In the future will the poetry of cinema only be able to be expressionistic, macro-pop, deforming, gigantic, distressing, and hallucinogenic? And the mandolin players? And the good dog face of Moravia, who listens to them, contrite over a plate of chicory? Oh, I don't have any regrets: whoever loves reality too much, as I do, eventually hates it, rebels against it, and tells it to go to hell. But I don't believe in a cinema of lyric poetry obtained through editing and the intensification of technique.

*Slap-dash or hurriedly made Godard.—Ed.

Notes

1. The Lambro, a river about seventy miles long that flows from Lake Como to the Po River. The prologue and epilogue of Pasolini's film *Oedipus* (1967) were filmed in this region.

2. *Rinascita*, a Communist Party journal published weekly. In 1965 *Rinascita* and *Contemporaneo* merged.

3. See Introduction, pp. xviii-xix, for a discussion of Pasolini's use of the term "contamination."

4. "La lingua scritta di azione," *Nuovi Argomenti* (April-June 1966), 67-103.

5. A reference to one of the more famous episodes in Dante, *Purgatorio* 3: 112-35, the story of Manfred. The natural son of Frederick II, Manfred was killed in the battle of Benevento by French and Papal forces. He tells Dante (118-23): "After I had my body pierced by two mortal stabs I gave myself weeping to Him who pardons willingly; horrible were my sins, but the Infinite Goodness has such wide arms that It receives all who turn to It."—*The Divine Comedy*, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton, 1973), III.

6. Robert Flaherty's poetic documentary of an Irish fishing village, *Man of Aran* (1934).

7. Possibly Pasolini means the American avant-garde filmmaker Stan Brakhage (1933-).

8. See "The 'Cinema of Poetry,'" pp. 181-83, for Pasolini's discussion of Godard.

The "gag" is generally a stylistic process which intends to make an action automatic: a bit like the mask in the *teatro dell'arte* is meant to make the character automatic.¹

The "gag" and the "mask" move between two poles (between two diametrically different uses): on the one hand, they can reach the maximum of automatism by transforming the action and the personage into an abstraction which counts as an element of a non-natural representation; on the other, through the synthesis which they operate, necessarily, I would say technically, they convey the essential humanity of an action and of a character, presenting them in a brief, inspired moment which conveys its reality at its apex (and the context is therefore realistic, albeit without a touch of naturalism).

Generally the "gags" are scattered in the films, interrupting another kind of narrative technique. Only the silent comic films are composed *entirely* of gags. They are therefore a unique technical and stylistic phenomenon. The cinema of Chaplin does not resemble any other cinema: it is another universe.

In the cinema of Chaplin *there is not* everything that *there is* in other films. When compared to the rest of cinema, the films of Chaplin can be defined only by subtraction, in a kind of negative phenomenology. I am speaking, of course, of the silent films. In Chaplin's sound films this absolute originality no longer exists; in common with other films Chaplin's films have dialogue, which is the negation of the "gags." Thus, in the sound films the "gags" can no longer constitute the only stylistic structure, but alternate with another structure, which is the audiovisual one, in which mime or pure physical presence and oral word are integrated and cannot therefore avoid those "touches of naturalism" of which I spoke and which are incompatible with the *purely realistic* syntheses of the "gags."

Note

1. Usually commedia dell'arte, a theater of improvisation using masks and pantomime that was performed by wandering companies from the mid-sixteenth into the eighteenth century.

* *Bianco e Nero*, n. 3-4 (March-April 1971). [The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

reality / love
camera - reality order

RES SUNT NOMINA*

There was, okay, a being which never-always yesterday-tomorrow is.

It doesn't need anything: it doesn't love!

Love is no more than a small human requirement outside every reality.

Therefore: the being is beyond any being.

But let us come to the crossroads where freedom is born.

In the world there is (!) a machine that not for nothing is said to shoot.¹

It is the "Reality Eater," or the "Eye-Mouth," as you like.

It does not limit itself to looking at Joaquim with his father and his mother in the favela.

It looks at him and reproduces him.

It speaks of him through himself and through his parents.

In the reproduction—on screens large and small—

I interpret him (Mestizo? Portuguese? Indian? Dutch? Black?) as in reality.

The eyes, the mouth, the cheekbones, the chin, the skin are no other;

I return to his provenance from the North of Brazil and to his ancestors . . .

You understand me.

He is language on the screen or on the small laboratory screen.²

If I interpret him as language on that screen or the small screen, and if I did decipher him otherwise in that reality, a real day at the end of March 1970 in the favela on the Barra street—

Then the language of the "Reality Eater" is a brother to the language of Reality.

Illusion, yes, illusion, here and there: because

who speaks through that language is a Being who isn't and doesn't love.

.....

NOTE

For some time now I have wanted to write a "Philosophy" of cinema, consisting in the overturning of nominalism: not "nomina sunt res" but "res sunt nomina."³ If reality is to be decoded, there

Things are names
*Blanco e Nero, n. 3-4 (March-April 1971). [The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

must of necessity be an encoder; if there is a decoder there must be an encoder.

Let us consider this Joaquim: he presents himself to my eyes in an environment (the beach of Barra, under the Corcovado), and he expresses himself, first with his pure and simple physical presence, his body, then with mime (his way of walking, not only expressive in and of itself, but deliberately made such to communicate certain things in a certain way to the observer), and finally with oral language. But these three means of his self-expression are only three moments of a single language: the language of the living Joaquim.

Who encoded Joaquim? Because there is no doubt that the "res" Joaquim is a word or group of words (nomen) of which I am the decoder.

Now let us transport the body of Joaquim, with his yellow-brown skin, his hair cut short like a soldier's, his plebeian flesh, pure as a result of infantilism and malnutrition, his obvious sexual violence, the poverty of his clothing, etc., etc., from the reality of the beach of Barra to the screen.

Let us assume that this screen is *that of the cinema and not that of a film*, and that we are therefore dealing with an infinite subjective sequence shot from the point of view of the observer. This assumed, is there perhaps any difference in my way of decoding Joaquim in reality and on the screen?

Both there and here Joaquim is a "res," but the "res" is a "nomen" because it must be heard or read or decoded as such. As I said, there still remains the mystery of the Encoder. A Catholic would say God, who expresses himself through the infinite polysemia of an infinity of "things as words" (herein included the human written-spoken language). (Nominalism concerns only written-spoken language, as an archaic and magic operation, later fixed in a convention—which has not lost its evocative characteristics.)

In short, reality (spied on by the cinema) is a "whole" whose structure is the structure of a language.

My ambition would be that of undertaking an organic study—gathering all the scattered threads of semiology—or reality as language ("a whole of meaningful res").*

I have called cinema "the written language of action," thus giving reality an ontologically pragmatic physiognomy; now, in this unrealizable project my intention would be that of deprogramming real-

*How does the decoder insert himself in the "world as language to be decoded"? The latter is external by definition, but the decoder has a body, and it is in it that he lives the world, internalizing it. The internalized world is no more than the equivalent of the nonverbal, that is, of the synthesized experience of a concrete and continuous decoding. The "thought language" (that is, neither spoken nor written) has an equivalent in imagined or dreamed objects. But enough of this.

ity understood as a whole of "res" which are arranged and evolve in time, eternally in motion like "actions," albeit elementary (even a stone, motionless on the gravel bank of a river, as "meaningful res," moves in time: its material presence in front of the decoder is a "duration," the infinitesimal fragment of its extremely long history. The decoding is also a succession which follows the happening of things, from the most elementary, such as the "stroke" of the telluric existence of a stone, or an inextricably complex political event such as Kennedy's assassination—the "speaking body" of Joaquim is an intermediate case).

The development of the theory of this pragmatic relationship between the decoder and the decodable for now remains a project, a frustrating lacuna in my work.

But I would like to ask another question.

Assuming that all that I have said is credible, that it is a hypothesis which can be taken into some consideration (reality as language whose words are things), it is clear that in our everyday lives everything with which we come into contact is a "sign of itself." Joaquim on the beach of Barra was a "sign of himself," which I, well or poorly, decoded in a pragmatic relationship.*

The living Joaquim is a sign of himself, in that every res is a nomen, that is, a sign.

A sign, in terms of its expressiveness, is the equivalent of another sign (any other sign); every hierarchy among signs is unjust, unjustifiable.

On the communicative level this is so obvious that it is useless to speak of it.

Let us then make the great leap (which very few of those who discuss or disagree with my research are able to do, or to be aware of); let us pass from the purely linguistic (or better, semiological) to the aesthetic level.

Let us transport the "sign Joaquim" from a communicative context to an expressive context; from the level of language to that of metalanguage, from "*langue*" to "*parole*." Have I been clear?

Now then, the "meaningful res Joaquim" no longer appears to me on the screen of the cinema (see above) but on the screen where a film is shown.

Here, too, he is a sign of himself, but his function is not purely instrumental, but aesthetic.

It is exactly like taking the name (the masculine singular proper

*Including contemplation, whose principal vehicle is language—not so much instrumental language, which is inherent in that pragmatic relationship, as philosophical language, for the most part written and "thought"—which is, however, in the final analysis, also pragmatic (for a Marxist historiographer who does not believe in the other "dimension").

name) Joaquim and reading it in a poem rather than in a purely instrumental prose.

Both in the first case and in the second the "signs" undergo a semantic transubstantiation. Instead of satisfying an expectation they disappoint it (Jakobson).

If it is absurd to establish hierarchies among "signs" in the field of communication, it is equally absurd to establish hierarchies among "signs" in the expressive field.

The "res Joaquim" as connotation does not have competitors as to value, and so the "res Joaquim" as denotation. (The same thing that happens to the "word Joaquim.")

In what does the semantic transubstantiation of a sign consist when it passes from the field of communication to that of expression? It consists especially in an infinitely greater inclination toward polysemy.

Many intelligent persons (most recently Chiaromonte) contend that a "res" in cinema (they mean in a film—given that in this field they are empirical) is irremediably monosemic; it is what it is, without leaving any space for the imagination of the spectator.

Those who say this do not take into account:

a) That reality is a language, and also in real life, as pragmatic dialogue between us and things (including our body), nothing is ever rigidly monosemic; on the contrary, almost everything is enigmatic because it is potentially polysemic. Furthermore, reality, too, has its contexts—its relationships of contiguity and similarity—which produce a transformation of meaning in the objects of which they are composed. Joaquim in the context of the beach is a different seme and semanteme than Joaquim in the shack of the favela. Furthermore, also *a parte subjecti* (on the decoder's part) there are different emotional conditions which modify the meaning of the objects to be decoded. Joaquim on the beach or in the favela has a different meaning for me than he has for Chiaromonte. From this, one deduces that Things are polysemic and therefore have a "natural" (pragmatic) enigmatic quality. One can also write or read poetry simply by living.

b) That in a film (artistic language: metalanguage of a "langue" which, like all "langues," is entirely deduced) there are contexts which are deliberately created by the aesthetic function. Such contexts transform the nature of a sign; as in reality, so also in a film, Joaquim on the beach and Joaquim in the shack of the favela are two different semes and semantemes, and not only as *in cinema*, as a result of an ineluctable "code," but as a result of the expressive freedom of the "message." Joaquim as "sign" in an aesthetic context has characteristics of all the other "signs" (meaning primarily the verbal ones, but also the iconic or musical ones; it never occurs to

anyone to say that the "Gioconda" or a phrase of *The Magic Flute* are coercions, monosemic signs, material impositions that diminish the imaginative freedom of the recipient).

I could maliciously deduce that whoever feels coerced by a "res" in a film (particularly if human)—such a meaningful "res" being understood as a mutilation of his freedom as interpreter—also suffers such a mutilation in reality, in his relations with that same "res" in life; his inhibitions are stronger than his capacity for aesthetic judgment. The "Gioconda" as physical manifestation does not appeal to me; if I were to meet a woman like that in reality, I would either be indifferent to her or I would not like her, but my physiognomic idiosyncrasy—or whatever—does not ordinarily keep me from using my freedom of aesthetic judgment; even if the signs (iconic, and therefore neither symbolic nor conventional) are quantitatively less polyvalent in painting than in literature. In cinema they are perhaps even less so than in painting, but each one must take into account his own idiosyncrasies and his own mental blocks in the presence of certain human types or certain kinds of things. Editing establishes contexts in which the relationship of contiguity and of similarity is analogous to that of every other artistic language; in such contexts the material object as sign of itself becomes polysignificant, and while its decoding on the purely linguistic level is analogous to that of its decoding on the level of reality (the code is the same), its interpretability on the aesthetic level is instead a *monstrum** and enjoys the same guarantees of unreliability and of happy "suspense" as in symbolic languages (which, it should not be forgotten, are always evocative, and evoke for each person the reality that *he* knows).

Rather, I can no longer escape this objection: "You say that the res-nomen of cinema is decoded through the same code as the res-nomen of reality; is this really true? The res-nomen in reality is really there, physically, while the res-nomen in cinema is *reproduced*. Furthermore, in reality you are immersed in the same environment as the res-nomen which you are decoding, while in the cinema you are in a different environment—the projection room, where you are denied smell, climate, and tactile relationship."

I have always said that the code of reality is *analogous* to that of cinema, and cinema is an abstraction that finds concrete form, in practical terms, in individual films. I only experience the latter, and I only know about them that they are formed of res-nomina, reproduced without smell, without climate, without the possibility of being touched. But these characteristics seem to me more typical of cinema as "artistic language" than of cinema as language and

*An exceptional thing.—Ed.

nothing more (exactly like the absence of words in the silent cinema; which, in practice, is presented in films neither more nor less than as a simple metric-prosodic restriction). In short, the characteristic of cinema as it finds concrete form in films is that of having a different "time" and "space" from reality; this, above all, is a guarantee of the "artistry" of cinema as "metalanguage"; it is the author who chooses the duration of time (the real duration of an entire action, or the synthetic leap: from the image of a person being born to the image of the same person dying). It is the author who chooses the space of a shot and the relationships of space between one shot and another. It is here that the fanatics of literature (of the system of conventional and symbolic signs) could find an equivalent of that freedom that they attribute only to the word: in the *inclusions* and the *exclusions* of time and space (always obviously calculable and potentially "manifestations" of an identifiable and analyzable system) there is a compensation for the unavoidability that "as code" persists in the framed objects; it is a question of a "metonymic" freedom which unleashes the "message" in the infinitesimal intervals of time and space between one shot and the next.

Notes

1. Shoot in the photographic sense: the Italian for a motion picture camera is *macchina da presa*, the "machine for taking or shooting (pictures)."

2. By "small laboratory screen" Pasolini probably means a moviola or editing machine.

3. That is, not "names are things" but "things are names."

GUR
avant-gardes → made language sacred
bourgeois

THE NONVERBAL AS ANOTHER VERBALITY*

It has always been said that not all thought is verbal. But perhaps because of the scarcity of my information, the incompleteness of my hurried readings, I have NEVER encountered a definition of the "non-verbal."

May I take the liberty of searching for something which resembles such a needed definition?

For some time now I have been speaking of a code of cinematographic decoding analogous to that of the decoding of reality. This implies the definition of reality *as Language*.

The book of the world, the book of nature; the prose of pragmatism, the poetry of life; these are commonplaces which come first in the wild prehistory of a "General Semiology of Reality as Language."

I have before me, in my garden in Eur,¹ a small oak tree: it is part of the reality which speaks; it encodes. The relationship is direct. I can speak of this oak to another and thus employ the written-spoken medium. This written-spoken medium is part of reality; in a General Semiology, on the latter [reality], languages would occupy the place of one of its many elements, etc., neither more nor less, etc.

But it is strange; man has always dissociated written-spoken language from reality. In the long history of cults, every object of reality has been considered sacred: this has never happened with language. Language has never appeared as hierophant.

Only in the heart of bourgeois culture was an actual, constant, important metalinguistic awareness born, and in fact language was made sacred, even if we remain in the literary context and do not spread out into that of religion—disregarding a generic mystical coalition. I am speaking of symbolism, of hermeticism, and in general of all the avant-garde movements of the second half of the nineteenth century and of the first half of the twentieth.

The metalinguistic awareness which has in some way, for the first time, made language sacred has been a classist phenomenon of entropy: it has been a phenomenon lived entirely within the bourgeoisie.

*From an epistolary interview with S. Arecco (*Filmcritica*, March 1971). [The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

language of working class
 language as evocation (instrumental) magic

The working class and Marxism have remained extraneous to this sacralizing process from the bourgeoisie: they acquired rationality, not the mystifying irrationality of the "confrontational" avant-garde movements.

Therefore, for the working class and for Marxist ideology language has remained a simple function, and the awareness of it was what it always was: the idea of a means of communication (perhaps also of the sacred). However, during all the long centuries in which there did not exist a "thing" or "phenomenon" of reality which did not know the glory of the tabernacle, language has always been considered the principal instrument in this relationship with reality. Magic formula, prayer, and miraculous identification with the thing indicated. Language has never lost its characteristic as "evocation," which was perceived in a purely instrumental fashion.

So far as I know, in defining the relationship between sign and signified, all of "scientific" linguistics, including structuralism, with the great Saussure, etc., has always ignored the original magic moment. Naturally linguistics is a science, and a science of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—when pure, innocent Racism, etc., was still in force—the idea of the greatness of Europe, of the greatness of the white bourgeoisie, etc.—magic was all colored.

What does the "sign" make of the "signified": does it "signify" it? It's a tautology. Does it point to it? It isn't scientific. Does it identify with it? It's an old quarrel between "nomen" and "res," etc., etc.

In reality there is no "signified": *because the signified is also a sign.*

Allow me the poet's freedom to state free things freely.

Yes, this oak tree that I have in front of me is not the "signified" of the written-spoken sign "oak tree": *no, this physical oak tree here in front of my sense is itself a sign—certainly not a written-spoken sign, but iconic-living, or however else one might wish to define it.*

Therefore, in substance the "signs" of the verbal languages do nothing more than translate the "signs" of the nonverbal languages, or in the case in point, the signs in the written-spoken languages merely *translate* the signs of the Language of Reality.

The location in which this translation takes place is the interior.

Through the translation of the written-spoken sign, the nonverbal sign, that is, the Object of Reality, presents itself once again, evoked in its physicality, in the imagination.

The nonverbal, therefore, is nothing other than another verballity, that of the Language of Reality.

Whether I use writing or I use cinema, I merely evoke the Language of Reality in its physicality by translating it.

In any case, I always give it Primacy. This is the *Fas-Nefas* of every author.²

Reading my "monologizing" verses, through the statement a reader thus finds himself in the presence of the nonverbal (including the statement which I adopt to communicate, that is, *to evoke*).

In every written text and in every spoken proposition (and not only in the screenplay) *one thus has a structure which wants to become another structure*; in other words, one has the process from the structure of the written-spoken language to the structure of the language of "reevoked" language, with all the regression that this implies.

In fact, when I say "oak tree" I regress to that original structure of language which is the Language of Reality, in order to then advance to the field of an imagination other than mine where the oak tree "sign of the language of Reality" is reconstituted as evoked (or remembered) physicality.

The process is the following: oak tree as sign of the Language of Reality—"oak tree" as written-spoken sign which *translates* it—oak tree as sign of the Language of imagined Reality.

Written-spoken languages are *translations by evocation*; audiovisual languages (cinema) are *translations by reproduction*.

The translated Language, therefore, is always the nonverbal language of Reality.

Notes

1. Eur is a modernistic residential quarter of Rome envisioned by Mussolini as a planned new city. Pasolini moved there in 1963.

2. *Fas*: permitted by the gods; *Nefas*: offensive to the gods (literally "unspeakable").

sound | image
thunder | lightning

CINEMA AND ORAL LANGUAGE*

The image and the word in cinema are one and the same thing: a topos. The perception of it as one thing or as a thing (more or less) divided and dissociated depends on the location of the spectator. At times the distance which separates a clap of thunder from a flash of lightning seems incredible; that is, such a diachrony between image and sound seems incredible. I saw a dubbed version of the stupendous *Tales of the Pale Moon of August*,¹ and the words dubbed from Japanese had nothing to do with the persons who were speaking; they happened in two completely different time frames. But one must not be deceived by these extreme examples nor by the more normal instances, that is, the majority of cases (films, particularly in Italy, precisely because of the dubbing, are always badly spoken). The thunder is a sort of regurgitation or yawn which hobbles behind the lightning. In reality the phenomenon of lightning and thunder is a single atmospheric phenomenon: cinema is, in other words, audiovisual.

I understand the charm of the rhetorical idea of cinema as pure image. In fact, even I myself make silent films with indescribable pleasure. But making silent films is nothing more than a metrical restriction, as, for example, terza rima in poetry, which infinitely reduces the possibility of speaking the speakable, causing the possibility of speaking the unspeakable to grow inordinately. The (antiquated) defenders of silent cinema as the only "optimum," thus, in conclusion, as precisely the rhetorical "norm"—attribute an ancillary function to the word in cinema, naturally assumed to be ORAL. As, for example, in melodrama. The words of *Traviata*, they say, are foolish and ridiculous, aesthetically not only devoid of worth, but rather, almost offensive to good taste; and yet that doesn't count for anything. It is the music that counts, they say. This statement seems so full of good sense and instead is completely senseless. Whoever says this ignores the "ambiguity" of the poetic word: the contrast between "meaning" and "sound" which cannot be eliminated. Poetry is (Valéry, quoted by Jakobson) "une exitation prolongée entre le sens et le son."² Therefore, every poem is metalinguistic, because every poetic word is an incomplete choice between its phonic value

* *Cinema nuovo*, n. 201 (September–October 1969). [The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

and its semantic value. The reversal of the relationships between contiguity and similarity (still Jakobson) multiplies inordinately the polyexpressiveness of the poetic word.

In conclusion: in every poem there is inevitably what is called "semantic expansion." This is pushed to a paroxysm in the symbolist poets, for example, but it is a phenomenon found in all the poetic languages of the world. It is the sound (spoken out loud or heard in the head, as a musician hears the music reading the score) which derails, deforms, propagates the meaning by other roads. Now music applied to words is simply the extreme example of what I have said. Music destroys the "sound" of the word and substitutes another for it, and this destruction is the first operation. Once it has taken the place of the sound of the word, it then takes care of effecting the "semantic expansion" of the word, and what a semantic expansion we have in the words of *Traviata*! If the "naked" sound of the word can expand the meaning of the word itself toward the "clouds" and create something which lies between the meaning "naked body" and the meaning "cloudy sky," you can imagine what a c from the diaphragm would make of the same word!

Words are therefore not at all ancillary in melodrama; they are extremely important and essential. Only that the hesitation between meaning and sound in them has the appearance of an option in favor of sound, and later this sound has been supplanted by a sound which is different from the phonic one, and which—being infinitely more sound—has infinitely greater possibilities of working semantic expansions. In cinema the word (with the exception of the least relevant instances of road signs and "credits") must be considered in its ORAL manifestation. This is what drives mad those who have not had occasion to read at least Morris.³ And who are therefore convinced that language is a privileged system unto itself, and not one of the many possible systems of signs. Now, for centuries we have been used to making aesthetic evaluations based exclusively on the WRITTEN word. It alone seems worthy to us of being not only poetic but also simply literary. Because in cinema instead the word is ORAL, it is naturally perceived as a product of little worth or actually despised. I would like to have seen these creatures of habit listen to the ORAL word of Homer when he recited his poems in a period in which neither writing nor printing had been invented. Well, certainly judgment was more difficult; as it is now more difficult to understand if a verse is beautiful or ugly if heard in the voice of an actor—because the voice of the actor and his performance interfere. Jakobson, once again, I believe, had an actor say the words "good evening" forty times with forty different meanings.⁴

This does not deny that ORAL poetry has a right to exist, or more

precisely, that it exists. Aestheticians have gone mad for years trying to find the difference between the written word of the theatrical text (written and therefore literary) and the spoken word of the performance; as we go crazy today trying to find the difference between the written word of the screenplay and the cinematographic representation. It is only semiology that can resolve these problems, with its descriptions of the different "systems of signs," which in many cases lend themselves to each other to be the most elementary level of "double articulation" (see Umberto Eco).*

An objective examination of the system of signs of cinema reveals to us first of all that it is audiovisual: as a historian of religions would say, image and sound are a "biunity." This is a semiological observation; what can an artist do with it? Nothing. It is obviously a completely descriptive observation, applied to that which is. An artist—who may well know nothing of semiology—can instead say to himself, "What a marvelous opportunity! Making my characters speak instead of a naturalistic and purely informative language, only prudently endowed with touches of expressiveness and vivacity—making my characters speak the metalanguage of poetry instead of this language, I would bring *oral poetry* back to life (which has been lost for centuries, even in the theater) as a new technique, which cannot fail to force us into a series of reflections: (a) on poetry itself, (b) on its destination."

Notes

1. The film *Ugetsu Monogatari* (1952) directed by Kenji Mizoguchi. Its subtitle is "tales of the pale August moon" (*racconti della luna pallida d'agosto*).

2. Jakobson writes: "Valéry's view of poetry as 'hesitation between the sound and the sense' is much more realistic and scientific than any bias of phonetic isolationism."—"Linguistics and Poetics," *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 367.

3. See "The Code of Codes," pp. 276–83, for a discussion of Charles Morris.

4. This is an anecdote Jakobson relates about Stanislavsky, "Linguistics and Poetics," pp. 354–55.

* *Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazione vive* [Notes for a Semiology of Visual Communications] (Bompiani 1967), *La struttura assente* [The Absent Structure] (Bompiani 1968). [Rather than translating *La struttura assente*, which incorporates *Appunti*. . . , Eco rewrote the book in English as *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).]

Premise. I find myself, as a student, writing an essay: "The Freedom of the Author and the Liberation of the Spectators":[†] a theme dictated in the spiritual style of the advanced pre-John XXIII Catholicism, and updated later, with authentic passion, in these recent years characterized by pragmatism. This style is therefore "ambiguous"; it is placed exactly between spiritualistic genericity and pragmatic precision, and I, a slightly confused student, find myself compelled first of all (actually perhaps exclusively) to examine metalinguistically the topic which I am to develop.

The words of the theme are four: "freedom," "author," "liberation," "spectator." Let us examine them.

1) "Freedom." After having thought about it carefully I understood that this mysterious word finally doesn't mean any more than "freedom to choose death." And this, without a doubt, is scandalous, because to live is a duty; on this are not the Catholics (life is sacred because God gave it to us) and the Communists (we must live to fulfill our duty to society) in agreement? Nature is also in agreement, and to help us to be lovingly attached to life it furnishes us with the "instinct of self-preservation." Except that, as opposed to the Catholics and the Communists, nature is ambiguous; and in fact here she is, furnishing us with the opposite instinct, that is, the desire to die. This conflict—which is not contradictory as our rational, dialectical mind would want, but oppositional and therefore nonprogressive, not capable of optimistic syntheses—takes place in the depths of our spirit: in the unknowable depths, as is well known. But "authors" are charged with making this conflict as manifest and explicit as possible. They have, really, the lack of tact and the unconventionality necessary to reveal in some way the "desire to die" and to therefore fail the norms of the instinct of self-preservation; or more simply, to fail SELF-PRESERVATION. *Freedom is therefore an autolesionistic assault on self-preservation.* Freedom cannot be manifested other than through a great or small martyrdom. And

* *Nuovi Argomenti*, n. 20 (October–December 1970). [Pasolini helped to revive and revitalize this important journal in 1965. The overall italics have been removed from this essay and normal emphasis has been restored.]

†It concerns a conference of filmmakers at Assisi.

every martyr martyrs himself by means of the self-preserving executioner.

To remain in our field—that of style, i.e., of poetry and cinema—one can then say that every infraction of the code—an operation necessary for stylistic invention—is an infraction of self-preservation, and therefore it is the exhibition of an autolesionistic act: through which something tragic and unknown is chosen in the place of something quotidian and known (life).

I would like to stress the word exhibition. The author's dedication of himself to the wounds of martyrdom in the very moment in which he transgresses against the instinct of self-preservation, substituting for it that of self-destruction, does not make sense if it is not made as explicit as possible; if, as I was saying, it isn't exhibited. In every author, in the act of invention, freedom presents itself as a masochistic loss of something certain. In the necessarily scandalous act of inventing he exposes himself, literally, to others; precisely to scandal, to ridicule, to reproach, to the feeling of difference, and—why not?—to admiration, even if it is somewhat questionable. There is, in short, the "pleasure" that one has in every fulfillment of the desire for pain and death.

2) "Author." If a maker of verses, of novels, of films, finds a conspiracy of silence, connivance, or understanding in the society in which he operates, he is not an author. An author can only be a foreigner in a hostile land; in fact, he inhabits death rather than life, and the feeling which he excites is a more or less strong feeling of racial hatred.

Only whoever believes in nothing (even if he is under the illusion that he believes in something) *can love life* (the only real love, I say, which can only be *completely disinterested*); it is therefore obvious that an author loves life. But his love has only a few common and recognizable traits; common and recognizable traits explained by the fact that he is, today, petit bourgeois among petit bourgeois, and often he too has the petit-bourgeois illusion of the reality of the world and of history, and therefore of the duties to obey out of loyalty. But, whether he knows it or not, in reality he does not believe in anything; that is, he believes in the contrary of life, and it is this faith of his that he expresses by lacerating himself with the wounds of his testimony. And the disinterested love for life which he derives from this total pessimism of his (however masked at times by petit-bourgeois idealism) can only have obscure and unrecognizable traits that spread around him a condition of uneasiness and panic, which can be overcome only because in the end all men are potential authors, endowed, that is, with an unknown and unconfessed instinct for death—by definition, anti-self-preservation.

3) "Spectator." For the author, the spectator is merely another author. And here he is unquestionably correct, and not the sociologists, the politicians, the pedagogues, etc. If in fact the spectator were in a subordinate position with respect to the author—if he were, that is, the unit of a mass (sociologists), or a citizen to be lectured (politicians), or a child to be educated (pedagogues), then one couldn't even speak of an author, who is neither a social worker, nor a propagandist, nor a school teacher. If then we speak of works by an author, we must consequently speak of the relationship between author and intended recipient as a dramatic relationship between democratically equal individuals. The spectator is not the individual who understands, who sympathizes, who loves, who becomes passionate. *Such a spectator is as scandalous as the author: both shatter the order of self-preservation which requires either silence or relationship in a common, average language.*

4) "Liberation." Things being thus, one cannot speak of "liberation" of the spectator either in a sociological sense (freedom from mass consumption), or in a political sense (freedom from wrong ideas), or in a pedagogical sense (freedom from ignorance). In fact, in reality one can't even speak of "liberation," because the REAL spectator is already FREE. One should instead speak of the "freedom of the spectator": and in this case it would be necessary to define this liberty of his. And in fact the "freedom" of the spectator, even though, as I have said, the latter is equal to the author and therefore enjoys his same freedom to die—that is, to immolate himself on the mixture of the pleasure and pain in which the transgression against the self-preserving normality consists—in the moment in which he is spectator, pragmatically dissociating his own figure from that of the author, he enjoys another type of freedom, about which I could not say if it integrates or overturns the definition of freedom that I gave above.

The specific liberty of the spectator consists in ENJOYING THE FREEDOM OF OTHERS.

In a certain sense, therefore, the spectator codifies the uncodifiable act performed by the author who invents, inflicting on himself more or less serious wounds, and in this way asserting his right to choose the contrary of his prescriptive life and to lose what life orders him to save and preserve.

The spectator, as such, enjoys the example of this freedom, and as such objectifies it; reinserts it into the speakable. But this happens outside all "integration"; in a certain sense outside of society (which integrates not only the scandal of the author but also the scandalous comprehension of the spectator). It is a relationship between individuals which happens under the ambiguous sign of the instincts and

editing = infraction of code = death

under the religious (not confessional) sign of charity. The negative and creative freedom of the author is brought back to *the feeling*—which it would like to lose—of the freedom of the spectator, inasmuch as, I repeat, it consists in enjoying the freedom of others; an indefinable act in reality, because it is saintly, but which could be reduced to current terms by observing that it objectifies and recognizes the unobjectifiable and the unrecognizable by means of sympathy.

*Examples: Godard, Straub, Rocha, etc.*¹ Every work of art is metalinguistic (Jakobson).² Only the degree of metalinguistic awareness between authors varies. Through the subversion of the relationship of contiguity and similarity of discourse, the author obtains the infraction of the code which makes of his message—in the eyes of the addressee—a “frustrated expectation.”

The greater the metalinguistic awareness of the author (I express myself simplistically), the more the relationships of contiguity and similarity are upset, and the more, therefore, the expectation of the spectator is consciously and explicitly frustrated.

A filmmaker working today not only knows how to, but wants at all costs to frustrate this expectation.

The place in which he performs the necessary actions for such a frustration (the infractions of the code, which, as we have seen, coincide with a subversion of the relationships of contiguity and similarity of the word) is editing.

It is therefore at the *moviola* that the “freedom” of the author, conceived as sadomasochistic exhibitionism, which frees itself from the code through shame and challenge (which will be punished through scandal), is manifested and is analyzed.

For such an operation to be clear it is necessary to group on the one hand the notions of “repression, decency, linguistic convention,” [and] on the other, the notions of “self-punishment, violation of decency, linguistic freedom.”

Making cinema of cinema or “placing within the film the problem of film itself,” etc., simply means opting for an explicit metalinguistic awareness; and namely, to opt directly for the frustration of the spectator (the spectator whose freedom consists in “enjoying the freedom of others”).

The practical consequence of such an attitude has been a discrimination between spectators. In fact, they have come to be grouped into two categories: category A enjoyed the sadomasochistic freedom of filmmakers, almost participating in the orgy of transgressions, while category B (the overwhelming majority) was scandalized, withheld itself, laughed, screamed, in short, covered

the authors with the shame that they were explicitly demanding (self-punishment for the transgression against linguistic fraternity).

Godard in front of the moviola (and naturally shooting, also: an operation whose function in any case was editing) is like an unknown martyr who reveals his own sin of heresy or of betrayal of the fraternity in order to be martyred. In the moment of provocation, which in his case has been and is formal (also and precisely in that negation of form which he has been carrying out in his latest works), let us assume, in front of a shot of abnormal duration, which, that is, goes beyond the limit of what can be tolerated as well as that of custom, he obviously finds himself working on two levels: (1) he wants to cause reflection *on the cinema*, making it impossible for the spectator to delude himself that he is simply in front of *a film*—or in any case a work of art to be accepted naturally; (2) he wants to wound the spectator as an imbecile—that is, as an enemy of cinema—who in his blessed lack of awareness has paid for his ticket to see “a film,” in the case of a category B spectator (sadism toward the spectator, implemented with a contempt of sorts; a smile of nearly ascetic cruelty); (3) he wants to create in the spectator (this time of category A) the pleasure of suffering, “bearing” the martyrdom of an unnatural shot with pleasure (sympathy with the author, as co-optation to martyrdom); (4) he correctly wants to suffer his own martyrdom, inasmuch as the spectator of category B, that is, people who go to the movies, will not fail to decree it (something that naturally implies consequent pleasure).

The infraction of the code—the freedom from cinema—put into effect through the metalinguistic awareness of the code of cinema, is therefore a sadomasochistic phenomenon even too easily analyzable in the laboratory (nor do I, as filmmaker, declare myself exempt from it; on the contrary)!

That what I say is true has been demonstrated by the latest events of Godard as author, in which his personal case is offered directly for analysis: he has thrown himself headfirst into the void of martyrdom—a martyrdom without pleasure because lived only as passive fault. The words of Che Guevara, publicized by the student “crowd,” have been fatal to him: that the intellectual should commit suicide is a foolishness, it is a pure clause of the “art of rhetoric”; even a child would understand it. But Godard, more defenseless than a child, believed it; he made a real problem of it for himself. And instead of continuing to martyr himself in front of the moviola, to exhibit his metalinguistic wounds as infractions of every cinematographic code, he opted for an aprioristic total negation: which, insofar as this is concerned, is unquestionably “pragmatic.” Enough. I don’t want to be a moralistic.

Straub has not, like Godard, undergone the blackmail of "leftism," but he has undergone the blackmail of Godard.

In his last film he has taken some nonprofessional actors, dressed them as ancient Romans, carried them to the Aventine, in the middle of deafening traffic, and compelled them to learn their lines by heart and then to recite them perfectly very rapidly in French (an absurdly pronounced French). The result was a "play" given in a sort of "open-air family performance"; meticulously, without discarding a comma from the text, from top to bottom. Rigorous and insane, the entire *Othon*³ was conceived "metalinguistically"; the guiding thought was: make a film performed as a theatrical production, from the first word to the last, precisely as a film *should not be*. From this, interminable scenes (also completely unadorned; in fact, any ornament would have inevitably been "cinematographic") and scholarly (in fact, only a diligent scholarly performance—and not a refined professional one—could have justified the ironic operation). Straub did not work on the editing; he had completely planned the sadomasochistic self-punishment (here I am, spectator, to torture you; here I am, spectator, to be tortured) in thinking and shooting the film, made of a series of elementary sequence shots, connected simply in the moviola, one to the other. The absence of editing is precisely a provocative element; the freedom from the cinematographic code obtained with the sacrifice of oneself, by feeding oneself to wild animals—by rendering oneself a "monster," agent provocateur, martyr, flirt, and victim—thus tends violently toward the negation of cinema, toward an almost total frustration which, if it isn't suicide, is in any case a sort of seclusion; a mystical practice not without humor which abandons the world to its "imbecile" will to lynch and to its return to its habits.

Glauber Rocha has also undergone the blackmail of the leftist-avant-gardists (as for me, I reserve the right to cast this first stone), and *Antonio das Mortes*⁴ testifies to it; category A spectators took him behind the barricades with them, followed this time by the fearful traditional Communists who read in this film the schematic revolutionary claims with which they are satisfied. It must be said immediately that in the work of Rocha, whose figurative fantasy is not demoniacal, the provocation is prefilmic; the camera behaves conventionally, I would say classically, and so also the take in the moviola. I would say that the manipulated reality *in front of* the camera also behaves conventionally in part (some carnival dances of colored natives, the countryside, a duel, etc.), but suddenly here is the thirst for freedom "as sadomasochistic affirmation of meta-

³Pasolini uses the French *pièce* here.—Ed.

linguistic awareness"; it manifests itself, I repeat, prefilmically, in scenes which are precisely . . . sadomasochistic (a sort of coitus on a bloody cadaver) or in epiphanies that are so deliberate (the liberty women dressed in purple) that they ask for and immediately obtain martyrdom. I must repeat the refrain; the spectators are wounded by the filmmaker "aware of his language," and in turn they wound the filmmaker (with the exception of the privileged spectators who share with him the idea that the extremist scandal is necessary); so that the filmmaker can enjoy equally the pleasure and the pain of martyrdom, testifying to his own "freedom from repression" as suicidal intoxication, defeatist vitality, didactic self-exclusion, exhibition of meaningful sores. Are these virtually hagiographic "examples" loci of a reactionary writing? No; I myself, when working with the moviola (or earlier, when shooting), feel the almost sexual effect of the infraction of the code as the exhibitionism of something violated (a feeling that one also experiences when writing verses, but which cinema multiplies ad infinitum; it is one thing to be martyred in private, and something else altogether to be martyred in the public square, in a "spectacular death"), but the essential thing is to remain alive and to keep the code vigorous; suicide creates a void which is immediately filled by the worst quality of life; while excessive transgression against the code finishes by creating a sort of nostalgia for it. Revivals are always based on a real fact, which is precisely the general nostalgia for a code which has been too poorly and "extremistically" violated. The revival of cinema under way in Italy today (Fellini, Visconti, the *Metello*, the *Indagini*, etc.), and throughout the world, is due to a nostalgia for the code, or a codification of extremist infractions (the appealing *Midnight Cowboy*, the unbearable *Easy Rider*, and all the recent "poor" American productions).⁵ But can't one be an extremist without being a fanatic or a terrorist?

Another example: the "underground" cinema. Every volunteer who searches for a meaningful death "as exhibition" must go on to the firing line, deliberately; there are no other places where he can rigorously put his program into effect.

Only the death of the hero is a show, and only it is useful.

By their own decision, therefore, the martyr-filmmakers always find themselves, stylistically, on the firing line; that is, on the front line of linguistic transgressions.

By dint of provoking the code (that is, the world which utilizes it), by dint of *exposing themselves*, they end up obtaining what they aggressively want: to be wounded and killed with the weapons which they themselves offer to the enemy. It is on this front that

they achieve their "freedom"—that of opposing to the extreme consequence the norm of self-preservation, and it is here that the spectator achieves his own freedom: that of enjoying their freedom.

But there are some filmmakers who, carried away by their heroic impetus or by the incitement and applause of the "few" (who, as a result of a law which is obviously and literally self-destructive, are the only ones who count), push themselves beyond the front line of transgressions.

They go beyond the firing line and find themselves on the other side, in enemy territory. Here, automatically, they are closed into a bag, or, to extend the metaphor more vividly, they are crowded together into a concentration camp, which they then, as happens, transform equally automatically into a ghetto.

There, where everything has become transgression, there is no more danger; the moment of the fight, the one in which one dies, is at the front.

The victory over a transgressed norm becomes immediately incorporated into the infinite possibilities of modification and expansion of the code.

What is important is not the moment of the realization of invention, but the moment of invention. Permanent invention; continual struggle. Whoever has crossed over the line on which combat occurs has nothing more to risk. One of the recent "underground" films, presented to the "few," that of Bussotti ("Rara"), is, for example, a film which does not offer its author any possibility of demonstrative martyrdom. The transgressions of the film do not take place on the barricades, but in the enemy hinterland, within the concentration camp, where *everything is transgression*, and the enemy has disappeared: he is fighting elsewhere.

It is therefore necessary (in extremist terms or not) to compel oneself not to go too far forward, to break off the victorious rush toward martyrdom, and to go continuously backwards, to the firing line; only in the instant of combat (that is, of invention, enforcing one's freedom to die in the teeth of self-preservation), only in the instant when one is face to face with the rule to be broken and Mars is ancipital, under the shadow of Thanatos, can one touch the revelation of truth, of the totality, or in short, of something concrete.⁶ Once the transgression has taken place—which is achieved through a new invention—that is, in a new constituted reality—the truth, or the totality, or that Something concrete, disappears because it cannot be lived or stabilized in any way. It is for this reason that Power, any Power, is evil, whether it preserves institutions or whether it founds new ones. If a Power which is "less worse" than others is conceivable, this could only be a Power that, in preserving

or reconstituting the norm, took into account the appearances or possible reappearances of Reality.

Notes

1. Pasolini has chosen these three filmmakers because they are identified with New Cinema movements. See "The 'Cinema of Poetry,'" pp. 181-83, for Godard.

2. The ensuing discussion is informed by terminology from Jakobson's essay "Linguistics and Poetics." See "Cinema and Oral Language," n. 2.

3. Straub's film *Othon* (1972) is based on the classic French tragedy of the same name written by Pierre Corneille in 1664.

4. *Antonio Das Mortes* (1969) brings ritualized acting and stylized violence to a depiction of Brazilian peasantry.

5. *Metello* (1971), made by Mauro Bolognini, was based on the novel by the same name written by Vasco Pratolini. The *Indagine* films are a series of films "investigating" various aspects of society, the most famous of which is Elio Petri's *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto* (*Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion*, 1969). John Schlesinger's *Midnight Cowboy* was made in 1968; Peter Fonda's *Easy Rider* was made in 1969.

6. Only in a moment of crisis, where death is a possibility and the outcome is uncertain, can one experience some form of enlightenment.

A blond young man, my dear Eco, advances toward you. You do not smell him. Perhaps because he has no smell, or because he is far away, or because other odors form a barrier between him and you, or perhaps because you have a cold. Strange, because he should have a certain odor on him. He is blond, I tell you, but his blondness is slightly sooty, as if streaked with ancestral patinas, neglected and excluded from the barbaric and bourgeois blond of the great rich countries of the North. One would not say that he is racially blond. A joke, perhaps, of destiny. Or perhaps some unfaithfulness of some good struggling mother whose genealogical tree is unknown (Degli Esposti, Degli Innocenti, Degli Angeli, Dei Morti di Fame),¹ perpetrated by some soldier of a cold foreign mercenary army.

This blond hair is excessive; it forms what amounts to a fur hat, but the wind has disheveled that fur hat, and only a tall plume has remained, which (now that the wind has died down) forms a small monument out of proportion to the minute face. The minute face has lost eyes. They must be brown, but torment makes them opaque and seems to fill them with the yellow of old proletarian ills. With that yellow variegated gaze he looks around himself with a, so to speak, immobile mobility. He is overcome by fear. Worry about being there keeps him in suspense, hung up as if on a coat hanger. This impression is also increased by his get-up. It's a blue coat with gold buttons, from which a long handkerchief or a brazen multi-colored scarf dangles, after having been twisted around his neck. The legs under the sailor's greatcoat are scrawny. On his feet he wears small boots. A crumpled book sticks out of a pocket of his coat. The pallor of his face, the lower-class features, the contrast between the dirty, sooty blond of his hair, the gaudy poverty of his clothing, the smallness of his legs; everything makes one think of a Neapolitan; perhaps a youth who comes from the province of Naples: let us suppose from the land of the Mazzonei. Yes, a peasant race (in a hinterland not far from the sea) more than a sailor. But that book which sticks out of his coat (a cheap edition of Dante)? And that lost look, isn't its insecurity masked by timidity and hatred, as in the poor immigrants? In fact he draws close to you and, as if you were transparent, he whispers toward you, "I love Benedetta."

In describing this youth in long shot who comes toward you and speaks a sentence, I, as you see, have used the system of signs of our

written language. If I had met you at some conference at Frascati or Palermo, I would have used the system of signs of our spoken language.

What you have not understood is whether I have thus described for you with words Jerry Malanga in reality or Jerry Malanga in a film.

You would say that I have cheated. No. I made an analytical and not a technical description. I have in fact used—with metaphorical ambiguity, out of honesty—the “screenplay” term, long shot.

By now I have repeated many times that the Code of Reality and the Code of Cinema (of the cinematographic *langue*, which does not exist because only films/*paroles* exist) are the same Code.

It is in the name of this code that I almost experimentally draw near to the identification of Jerry Malanga, or at least of “a Neapolitan immigrant in America and returned to Italy with an attitude in which Neapolitan folklore and beat folklore have strange points in common.” All this second definition is—from a lively and artistic point of view—the product of a cognitive code which serves me to recognize both the real Malanga and the cinematographic one.

Well, no. I played a joke on you. The Malanga in long shot that I have described to you in a “lively” style is neither the Malanga of reality (street or drawing room) nor the Malanga of the screen.

What Malanga is he, then?

I won't tell you, because I want to continue the joke.

I will tell you later, forcing you, for now, to follow the line of my argument.

In your book *Notes for a Semiology of Visual Communications*,* splendid in its clarity (and I hope useful not only to the fortunate Florentine students to whom it is addressed), there are some preliminary observations to be made.²

A) You analyze a potentially infinite series of cognitive codes whose first and most simple units are at times the last and the most complex of what might be described as an underlying code. On various occasions you seem to arrive at the analysis of the most UNDERLYING of all the codes. And there you stop. One therefore has the impression that your book was written on the brink of an abyss. You do not lean out beyond that edge. You nearly touch it and then you back off, after having glanced at it absentmindedly. This code, the most UNDERLYING of all, is the one which concerns sensory perception, which you submit to the judgment of psychology, I believe, or to I don't know what other specific science, presenting it thus in your book as a given, to be examined thoroughly elsewhere.

*Bompiani, 1967. [Now incorporated into *La struttura assente* (*The Absent Structure*: Milan, 1968), as Parts A, B, and C.]

Leafing through your book I could list for you all or almost all of the places in which you stop, announcing the existence of a relationship of sensory perception with physical reality, on which then falls precisely the deep silence of an abyss.

B) On page 142, devoting yourself to my amateurish comments with a patience for which I am very grateful (cf. the rudeness of certain university professors), you write: "These comments would also eliminate Pasolini's idea of a cinema as semiology of reality, and his belief that the elementary signs of the cinematographic language are the real objects reproduced on the screen (a belief, we now know, of a *singular semiological naiveté* [the italics are mine—PPP] and which is in contrast with the most elementary aims of semiology, which is to eventually reduce the facts of nature to cultural phenomena, and not to bring the facts of culture back to natural phenomena)."³

Dear Eco, things are exactly the opposite of how you interpret them. That I am naive, there is no doubt, and in fact, because I am not a petit bourgeois—with all the violence of a maniac also in not wanting to be such—I am not afraid of naiveté; I am happy to be naive and also perhaps sometimes to be ridiculous.

But certainly this is not what you wanted to say; you said "naiveté" as a euphemism for "artlessness." I would also be willing to accept artlessness (which does exist), but not in this instance. Because all my chaotic pages on this topic (the code of the cinema equal to the code of reality in the context of a General Semiology) tend to bring Semiology to the definitive transformation of nature into culture. (I have repeated seven or eight times that a General Semiology of reality would be a philosophy which interprets reality as language.) In other words, I would like to plumb the depths. I would not want to stop on the brink of the abyss on which you stop. I would not want, that is, for any dogma to have any value; while in you, unconsciously, at least two dogmas remain consecrated: the dogma of semiology as it is and the dogma of secularism.

I am completely secular; as a child I escaped the lessons of doctrine: I was not confirmed, my father was not a believer, my mother—believing in a world full of archaic sweetness—never even compelled me to go to mass. And so, not even anticlericalism in my family (whence eventually mystical revivals).^{*} I am also fairly rational, so that even if I should rebel against the omnipotence and omnipresence of reason as the myth of the bourgeoisie (cf. Goldmann), I would do it reasoning sweetly.

Let us therefore suppose, "per absurdum"—I stress "per absur-

^{*}Pasolini uses the English word "revivals" here.—Ed.

dum"—that God exists. Let us transform nature into culture in the only way that is possible in advance. And let us dedicate no more than half a page to this fatuous matter.

If the God of Confessions existed, what would the semiologists say of the "sema"? And could Jakobson still say that "objects" (those famous natural objects or things, such as stones, trees, noses, bottles, etc., etc.) are "signs of themselves" and, in such a manner "reveal themselves"? Or, by chance, nature would not cease to be "nature" or self-revealing tautology, at the bottom of that abyss in which you leave our sensory relations immersed along with it? Sensory relations that constitute our psychophysical knowledge of natural reality, which is fulfilled according to the most UNDERLYING (but this nonetheless the most INTERACTING) of codes?

Now, because it is irritating to speak of God among secular people, let us limit ourselves to calling God Brahma, and let us shorten this to B.

The existence of B. (whose character is Vedic-Spinozan) causes the statement "reality is a language" to no longer be apodictic and unmotivated, but [to be] in some way sensible and functional: "reality is the language of B."

With whom does B. speak? Let us assume with Umberto Eco. (Who, having been extremely Catholic, I am told, now, concerning B., is a bit defensive.) Let us assume that in this moment B. speaks with Eco, using as sign, as ultimate sign, the hair of Jerry Malanga. But what difference is there between the hair of Jerry Malanga and the eyes of Umberto Eco? They are but two organisms of reality, which is a *continuum* without any break in continuity; a single body, as far as I know. The hair of Jerry Malanga and the eyes of Umberto Eco therefore belong to the same Body, the physical manifestation of the Real, of the Existing, of Being; and if the hair of Jerry Malanga is an object that "reveals itself" as "sign of itself" to the receptive eyes of Umberto Eco, it cannot be said that this is a dialogue; [it is] a monologue which the infinite Body of Reality has with itself.

At this point we can also free ourselves from the embarrassing notion of B. (which I do without trauma, as one who is secular without the religion, that is, the dogma, of secularism) and simply say that "Reality speaks with itself"; that the "sema" speak to other "sema" in a single context in which revelation and comprehension, question and answer, are the same thing (transmitter and receiver are identical).

You object that it is not possible that the "objects of reality" can be the second level of articulation of cinema. But you yourself teach me that codes can be interactive. I therefore do not see why the minimal unit of an Ur-code—that is, the cognitive code of reality, that is, the

self-revealing objects—cannot become a minimal level of another, higher code which is more cultural in a technical sense.

And after all, don't you yourself say it (page 49)? "And from simplification to simplification, the dream of the structuralist is, in the end, that of identifying the Code of Codes, *the Ur-code*, so as to permit the discovery of rhythms and cadences (the same operations and elementary relations) within all human behavior, analogous to the cultural and biological ones."⁴

Why have you allowed yourself to be awakened from this dream? Are you afraid of dreams? And why, if the structuralist can permit himself dreams, cannot the semiologist do so? And in the case that the semiologist, too, should want to dream, what is the best way of identifying the Ur-code, if not by considering "reality as language" (and not as a series of languages)?

"This Ur-code"—you add—"would consist of the very mechanism of the human mind rendered homologous to the mechanism which presides over the organic functions." Why do you thus stop every time (barely hinting at its existence) with a code of perception which man-in-nature has of nature?

Further on (pp. 99–100) you say again: ". . . But the first warning to keep in mind in a semiological research is that *not all the signifying phenomena can be explained with the categories of linguistics.*"⁵

Therefore the attempt to interpret visual communications semiotically is of interest in this sense: it allows semiology to demonstrate the possibility of independence from linguistics.

Because there are in fact sign phenomena which are considerably less precise than the phenomena of visual communication strictly speaking (painting, sculpture, drawing, signal codes, cinema or photography), a semiology of visual communications will be able to constitute a bridge toward the semiological definition of other cultural systems (those which, for example, put into play usable objects, as happens with architecture or industrial design).

Magnificent! But why not take yet another step forward toward the total transformation of physical and human reality into cultural phenomena, and examine sign phenomena that are *considerably less precise*, as are, in point of fact, those of physical and human reality in its totality, that is, the "im-signs" (according to the terminology of Peirce)?⁶

For every definition of the sign, you say, there is a corresponding phenomenon of visual communication. For the "im-sign," for example, there is the corresponding example of the portrait of Mona Lisa or the live shot footage of a televised event. . . .⁷

Magnificent! But, always on the level of the direct psychophysical cognitive relationship, does the phenomenon of visual communication not also correspond to the "natural im-sign" consisting of Mona

Lisa herself in flesh and blood (even though now dead), or to the Inter-Bologna soccer match itself, played one afternoon of one Sunday of this November and unfortunately lost by Bologna because of a questionable penalty kick?⁸ Or do you want to relegate these "real im-signs" to the limbo of that nature which cannot be transformed into cultural phenomena?

What were the eyes of Leonardo or the eighty thousand pairs of eyes of the fans that Sunday if not the protagonists of a cognitive relationship with those "natural im-signs"?

And, after all, you yourself say it—overwhelmed by an unforeseen elegiac impulse: "While, when from the rosy light which spreads in the sky I deduce the imminent rising of the sun, am I already responding to the presence of a sign which is recognizable through learning?"⁹

It is B., it is B., dear Eco, who says to himself, through the pink im-sign of the light and through your looking eyes, that a new day is breaking.

And at this level the Ur-code must be identified by the semiologists.

And so, through the very words of Morris, which instance a wonderful intuition, which is not, however, carried to its extreme consequences (a General Semiology), we have arrived at the center of the question: "The portrait of a person is to a considerable extent iconic, but is not completely so since the painted canvas does not have the texture of the skin, or the capacities for speech and motion, which the person portrayed has. The motion picture is more iconic, but again not completely so."¹⁰ So says Morris, and you comment: "Such an approach, when pushed to its limit, would persuade both Morris and common sense to destroy the notion of iconism; 'a completely iconic sign would always denote since it would be itself a denotatum,' which is the same as saying that the true and complete iconic sign of Queen Elizabeth is not Annigoni's portrait but the Queen herself (or a possible science fiction *doppelgänger*)."¹¹

The truth is subtle, damned, and impudent, nor does it acknowledge restraints or one-way signs! You said it jokingly. In fact every one of us and every object and event in reality "is the iconic object of itself." Not only, but you yourself have established a possible Saussurean catalogue of things, making a joking reference to science fiction: the "double" of which you speak is nothing more than the abstraction of the "living *langue*" which has been deduced from the presence of the "living *parole*" constituted by Queen Elizabeth in person!

Also, the language with which B. speaks with itself in a Spinozan fashion is therefore divided into "*langue*" and "*parole*"!

And at this point I am going to jot down in two lines a thing

which, to be minimally validated, would require an entire essay—so be it.

If reality is a language, it can therefore only be predicated on a Saussurean model, because, notwithstanding the act of independence from linguistics performed in practical terms by semiology, there is no possible "system of signs" which does not articulate itself in a code-abstraction (*langue*) and in a living-concreteness (*parole*). So: let us consider the Queen of England. The Queen of England exists only as an iconic symbol of herself in the context of the "*parole*," that is, in her psychological, physical, moral, personal, sexual, carnal concreteness; but from this one "deduces" an abstract Queen of England on the codified and codifying level of "*langue*"; here the Queen of England, although remaining always an abstract "iconic symbol of herself," loses every intimate and unrepeatable concreteness and becomes a public, social, and personal datum. The concrete person is therefore the iconic symbol of herself as "*parole*"; instead, the abstract person—that is, in social classifications—is the iconic symbol of herself as "*langue*." This happens for living and conscious persons as we two and the Queen of England are; it also happens for animals, things, events; the living im-signs, the semes. They, too, are concrete, figural symbols of themselves in their physical, noninterchangeable but violently singular presence; while they are figural symbols of themselves in the "*langue*" constituted by generalizations, classifications, genera, species—in short, by all that which is general, public, etc.

(1967)

NOTE

This letter has remained in a fragmentary state. But I want to at least finish the joke played on Eco.

Well then, that "blond boy" presented at the beginning through the signs of the written-spoken system of Italian, and subsequently decoded according to the code of the latter, is not a "blond boy" in reality nor a "blond boy" on the screen. *He is a "blond boy" on the stage.*

In the stratification of systems, the underlying system lends itself as material for the "double articulation" of the higher system. The "blond boy" (or the Queen of England) could also be photographed, painted, or sculpted. In short, he could be an iconic sign of himself in the context of many systems of signs, each one with its specific code. But he would never be encodable in any of these systems of signs if he were not *first of all* decodable in the system of the signs of

Reality as Self-revelation or as First Language, through its code, which is the Code of Codes.

This does not transform the cultural codes (literature, cinema, linguistics) into natural phenomena, but, on the contrary, transforms nature into cultural phenomena: it transforms all life into speech.

January 15, 1971

Notes

1. Degli Esposti, "of the exposed"; Degli Innocenti, "of the innocent"; Degli Angeli, "of the Angels"; are all last names traditionally given to foundlings. Dei Morti di Fame, "of the dying of hunger," with connotations of sexual frustration, is a Pasolini joke.

2. See Pasolini's footnote, "Cinema and Oral Language," p. 266.

3. *La struttura assente*, p. 152. Pasolini's page references are to the earlier book.

4. *Struttura*, p. 48.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

6. Peirce writes: "A *Sinsign* (where the syllable *sin* is taken as meaning 'being only once,' as in *single*, *simple*, Latin *semel*, etc.) is an actual existent thing or event which is a sign."—*Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 2: 250.

7. Pasolini refers to Eco's chart, *Struttura*, p. 108.

8. Inter is a Milanese soccer team.

9. *Struttura*, p. 109.

10. Charles Morris, *Signs, Language and Behavior* (New York, 1946), p. 23.

11. *Ibid.*; *Struttura*, p. 110. Eco's own English version has been used here from *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, 1976), p. 192.

THE THEORY OF SPLICES

While a poet may be recognized by one "verse," it is not possible to recognize a director by one shot or by a few shots; at least an entire sequence is necessary.*

This is the empirical proposition through which the director acknowledges in his own case the theory that defines cinema as essentially metonymic, in opposition to the essentially metaphoric character of poetry.

This suggests a hypothesis: that is, that the double articulation of cinema does not consist—this is a speech I make arguing with myself†—of the creative relationship between the frame and its objects (as minimal linguistic units called "kinemes" by analogy with "phonemes"), but, if anything, it consists of the creative relationship between the entire *order* of the shots and the entire *order* of the objects of which they are composed.

In other words: both in the double articulation of written-spoken language (word and phoneme) and in the hypothesized double articulation of cinematographic language (shot and object), one leaves aside the "syntactical succession" or the fact that words and shots are then arranged in time, not only one at a time but also especially in their contexts, and it is there that they have a meaning; and this is particularly applicable to cinema. And thus for the latter it is not permitted to forget, even for our convenience and for a single instant, its syntactical succession, the "great temporal lapse" in which it only finds its meaning once again; and one will instead have to make of this linear ordering a "category" which also remains a concrete and operative element in the reasoning concerning the double articulation (hypothesized and observed in the laboratory as concrete abstraction only through the concrete individual shot and the concrete individual objects of which it is composed).

This is why, probably, research on the "rhythmememe"*** is fundamental to cinema, as I had already suspected without ever examining it more thoroughly.

The hypothesis is that cinema, as artistic language—or at least

*This is a commonplace.

†See "The Written Language of Reality" and all my other writings on the topic.

**See above.

verified and tested only as such—is a spatiotemporal, and not an audiovisual language—if not in a preliminary, material analysis.

The audiovisual material would thus not be other than the physical sensory material which serves as body for a spatiotemporal language that is otherwise purely "spiritual" or abstract.

Let us consider a shot of a Woman who in an extreme close-up looks at a Plain, then the subjective master shot of the Plain seen as a reverse shot.

According to hypotheses which I advanced some time ago, a first phase of (semiological) linguistic inquiry would give us a syntactical nexus (of the type subject-verb-direct object), which I have called "vertical" because instead of organizing itself simply as a succession, it "fishes" continuously in the deep, in that matrix of semes that is the world of objects. The words which make up this elementary sentence—I have always maintained—are born of the double articulation (by analogy with written-spoken language) whose minimal units are "kinemes," that is, objects (which are objectively infinite) which belong to reality and which are contained in the shot (in the extreme close-up of the Woman who looks, her features, eyes, nose, mouth, hair, etc., part of her dress around her neck, perhaps a strip of sky behind her, with a few clouds; in the master shot of the Plain, the grass, the bushes, the sky, the cirrus clouds). I thus have the possibility of identifying a lexicon in these two shots which form a context and therefore a narrative succession (an infinite lexicon because the objects are infinite, as opposed to written-spoken languages, which possess a finite number of terms), a grammar, a syntax—and also a prosody (if the camera is motionless and is not felt, I will have a narrative prosody; if it is hand-held and moves freely in describing the Woman and the Plain, I will have a syntagma of poetic language).

All of this to summarize what I have said better elsewhere.

But now I have to add a new hypothesis: all that I have described and analyzed linguistically and grammatically is nothing more than an "appearance" in which another language and another grammar are "embodied," which, in order to be, need—like the spirit—to descend into matter.

What matters is not the relationship between the shot (the *moneme*) and the objects of which it is composed (the *kinemes*), a relationship that might be defined as *logicosemical*; and what counts is also not the relationship between the shot and the other shot: a relationship that might be defined as *logicosyntactical*.

What matters is the relationship of the order of the shots to the order of the kinemes, and the relationship of the order of the shots to the order of the shots.*

*It seems likely that there is an error in the second clause of the text.—Ed.

Let us see: the extreme close-up of the Woman is a space which has a relationship of fullness and emptiness with itself: the fullness is the space of the face of the woman; the emptiness—or other space—is the background of the horizon, plain, and sky. The master shot of the Plain is also a space, but infinitely greater, even though the shot has the same surface area and is contained in the same screen; also in the space of the master shot different spaces are to be found in different internal relationships: the earth, the sky, the surfaces of things—grass or bushes or rocks contained in the plain. It consists of a “secondary” relationship of spaces.

But in the meantime we have noticed that—in incarnated in the elementary relationship between two subject-verb-object shots—mysterious relationships of space, like lingering spirits of another dimension, become real and come to life in a close net: relationships of a primary character within the first shot; relationships, also of a primary character, between the space of the first shot and the space of the second shot; relationships of a secondary character between the internal spaces of the second shot.

The relationship (linguistic? grammatical? syntactical?) between these spaces which are a language that you speak through another language—a language of pure geometrical abstractions, which, in order to live, like Frankenstein adopt a body which on its own would be without life, ugly matter. Such relationships, I say, are not imaginable if they are not experimented and reflected upon in a temporal order.

The extreme close-up of the Woman lasts twenty seconds, the time necessary for the conflict of the spaces internal to the shot to be perceived and to reach the objectivity of a phenomenon which has been understood and labeled. If the extreme close-up of the Woman lasts four seconds, the relationship between the spaces internal to the shot is completely different; it remains incomplete, open, unresolved, disquieting. The same thing applies where the second shot is concerned.

But at this point the possibility of relationships, that is, of rhythms, increases at a dizzying pace: the extreme close-up of the Woman may last the twenty seconds that we suggested as a first example while the master shot of the Plain may last the four seconds that we suggested as the second example; or on the other hand, the extreme close-up of the Woman can last four seconds and the master shot of the Plain can last twenty seconds.

Or yet again: both the extreme close-up of the Woman and the master shot of the Plain last one second each; or, both the extreme close-up of the Woman and the master shot of the Plain each lasts half an hour.

In practical terms the temporal relationships are infinite, and therefore the meanings of the spatial relationships are infinite.

If I were a computer I could make a chart—in which the spatial relationships are indicated by little squares and the temporal relationships are indicated by lines—in which it would be possible to represent graphically *the entire gamut of the semantic and expressive possibilities* of the narrative relationships of that Woman with that Plain.

The “rhythmeme” would be a “monstrum”* in such a chart, that is, an amphibious spatiotemporal entity.

One could transcribe an entire film graphically, using the geometrical sign chosen to indicate the above mentioned monstrum, the rhythmeme.

In the final analysis such a graph would produce a panorama of the lengths of the individual shots and of the relationships and said lengths of time between the shots.

The editor attaches the shots to each other with “splices”; it is in this incalculably minimal fraction of time that we should calculate the “negative durations,” that is, *those which do not exist*; either as audiovisual material representation or as mathematicorhythmic abstraction. In the convention of the infinitesimal duration of a splice an even more infinitesimal real duration can take place; conversely, instead, an immense duration can take place—a life, a century, a millennium.

The graph of the rhythmemes thus contains *inclusions* of spatiotemporal entities and *exclusions* of spatiotemporal entities.

The former would constitute the graph of the existing audiovisual shots, while the latter would constitute the graph of the “splices,” *that is, of the “meaningful nonexistent.”*

I don't know if this second language, which can be reduced to a geometrical graph—extremely rational on the one hand, almost spiritual on the other—could by itself exhaust the language of cinema, or if instead it doesn't present itself as a sort of Psyche, which is not rhythmic but [is] materially audiovisual, inseparable from the soma and an integral part of it. If, however, it is true that the character of cinema is metonymical—outside of the prosody which concerns films as metalanguage—one can only fall back on an analysis which takes it into account on a linguistic and not on an aesthetic level and insert the rhythmeme in cinema as an integrating and essential element.

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*A “monster” or unusual phenomenon.—Ed.

There are, then, at least three simultaneous methods of cinematographic decoding, and probably it is on the identification, the abstraction, and the subsequent theoretical arrangement of this relationship that the most probable hypothesis of a "language of cinema" can be based. Let us observe one at a time these three simultaneous methods.

I. AWARENESS OF THE ANALOGY WITH THE
PHYSIOPSYCHOLOGICAL CODE OF REALITY

A woman looks at a plain. The subject, the verb, and the object of said action are decodable in the same way in reality and in cinema. As "simple" spectators we aren't terribly particular; we don't care that there is a "point of view" in cinema which is that of the author. We simply identify with the author, we live his vision; and, exactly there where the camera is, we decipher what happens in front of our eyes. The camera in this case is extremely close to the woman (it is an extreme close-up); well, we are there, under the nose of this character, looking at her; and looking at her, we decipher her, asking ourselves some questions: what is this woman doing here? Why is she so unhappy (or happy)? What is she looking for, looking far off (or near)? etc., etc. The woman answers us "as an iconic sign of herself," in the same manner in reality and in cinema. The same may be said of the plain.

It is understood that the fusion or confusion between that code of reality and the code of cinema is never total or totally achieved. Why? Because cinema in concrete terms does not exist: in concrete terms only the "film" that I am looking at exists, and therefore I never forget completely that I am in the presence of a fiction of reality since it is a "reproduction."

However, there is one case in which said "total fusion" is *almost* achieved, and there is a second case in which it is *actually* achieved.

The first case is that of a "live broadcast" on television.

Here we are no longer in the presence of a "film"; it is no longer a question of a fiction.

The Japanese television viewers who witnessed the hara-kiri of the writer Mishima deciphered this event employing the code of reality. In cases such as this, the only opposition to the complete

"fusion" between the code of reality and the code of the audio-visual language is the fact that the point of view is compulsory: it is that of the camera, with which the spectator must forcedly identify his own point of view.¹ However, the judgment on the event and the preceding analysis of it in life is identical to that which a spectator would have formulated if he had been an onlooker who had been "merely watching."

The second case, that in which the fusion between the code of reality and the code of audio-visual language is completely achieved, occurs in the imagination.

An action of imagined reality and an action of imagined audio-visual language are exactly identical.

To *imagine* a woman who looks at a plain in reality (with the lack of precision of peripheral details that *always* characterizes our imagination) corresponds exactly to *imagining* said woman who looks at a "plain" in an audio-visual representation.

I myself, as director, in the moment in which I imagine a scene or describe it in the screenplay imagine it as if it were real, in a spatiotemporal "continuum" which I know that the "film" (not the cinema!) will never be able to achieve. I imagine the "shots" only approximately (as they will eventually be in the "film" and as they never are in cinema!), skipping the "splices," that is, that fraction of a second that corresponds to the blink of an eyelid, following which the eye opens on another segment of spatiotemporal reality, as if the body had had the time to turn around (or of moving elsewhere, perhaps even to another country), or as if what had passed was not a fraction of a second, but actually a minute, or a year, or a decade.

In our imagination we decipher the "imagined reality" or an "imagined audio-visual representation" using the same code, because only in our imagination can we, on the one hand, choose reality *according to what its past will be*, that is, according to the representation that reality will become when it is finished, and, on the other hand, only in our imagination can that abstraction which is cinema be realized sensorially (and then only very roughly).

It is by following this FIRST MEANS of decoding cinema, that is, by employing only one code which is valid for reality and for the system of audio-visual signs, that we have the participation of the spectator in the action, his identification with the characters, etc., etc.: with all the annexed phenomenologies—be they psychological, sociological, ideological—through which the problem of cinema can be analyzed separately.

II. AWARENESS OF AN AUDIO-VISUAL CODE

At this level of decoding (simultaneously present with the first) we cease being simple spectators.

We are precisely aware that the code of reality and the code of the system of audio-visual signs coincide and that this coincidence is an element of the specific code of cinema.

As for the characteristics of this specific code, which can be described and can be rendered potentially normative, see above, "The Written Language of Reality," pp. 197-222, with its sketch of cinematographic grammar and syntax.

III. AWARENESS OF A SPATIOTEMPORAL CODE

See the preceding essay, "The Theory of Splices," pp. 284-87.

None of these three approaches, however, seems sufficient unto itself.

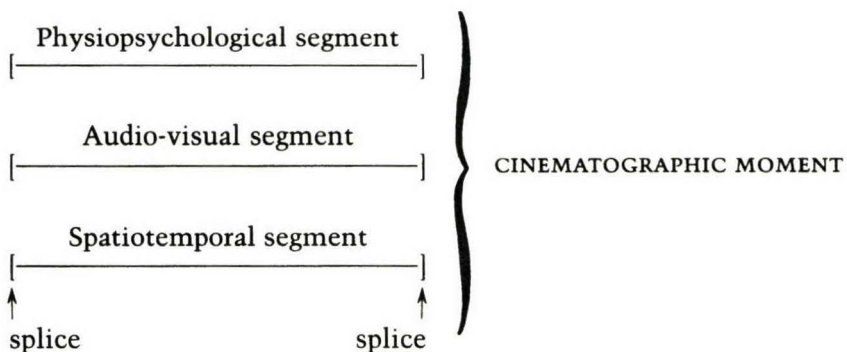
The first mode, in fact—that of the awareness of the analogy with the physiopsychological code of reality—concerns cinema as "langue," as pure conceptual hypothesis.

The second mode—that of the awareness of an audio-visual code—precisely because it is the most important inasmuch as it is specific, is also partial, and concerns cinema as "parole," because otherwise it would not be applicable.

The third mode—that of the awareness of a spatiotemporal code—concerns cinema as metalanguage, with its ineffability, which it can transform into statistics through the graphs of pure geometry.

Therefore, I repeat that these three modes can only be simultaneously present, and the eventual description of the language of cinema must be aware of this fact.

Following these observations, here is a possible graph of a shot:



The shot, therefore, is a physiopsychological, audio-visual, and spatiotemporal *inclusion*.

The splices which attach it to the preceding and to the following shot place said "inclusion" in relation to other "inclusions" through a physiopsychological, audio-visual, and spatiotemporal "exclusion" implied in the splice itself.

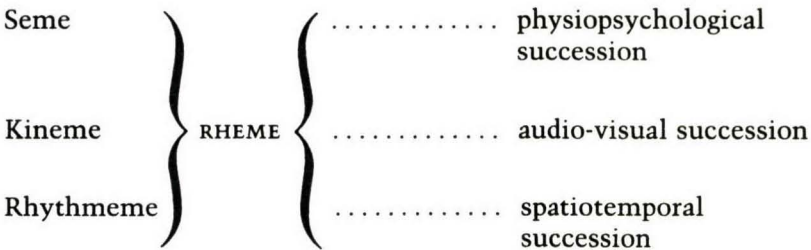
Splices exist only in films (paroles); in cinema (langue) they do not exist, as they do not exist in reality, and as they do not exist in our imagination (whether I imagine reality or cinema, foreseeing or remembering).

Film is a succession of physiopsychological, audio-visual, and spatiotemporal "inclusions" and "exclusions" which obey a need for synthesis.

Cinema and reality are instead continuities without exclusions or inclusions (both cinema and "imagined" reality).

The illusion of said continuity as succession (which is the foremost illusion of our senses) must be maintained in the film, so that it can be, I won't say understood, but conceived of.

Notwithstanding the splices which make it an "included moment," the shot, both within itself and in relation to the other shots, must obey the rules of succession; it must *flow* as do reality and cinema (also when they are imagined). It is a "rHEME";² and in this definition one can observe the simultaneous presence of the physiopsychological segment analogous to that of reality (seme), of the audio-visual segment (kineme), and of the spatiotemporal segment (rhythmeme), according to the following graph:



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Notes

1. Throughout this essay Pasolini hyphenates audiovisual to stress its compound nature.

2. A Rheme is defined by Charles Peirce as "a Sign, which, for its Interpretant, is a Sign of qualitative Possibility, that is, is understood as representing such and such a kind of possible Object."—*Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 2: 250.

TABLE

The "underlying" languages, as I was saying in the "Code of Codes" (pp. 276-83), offer material or offer themselves in their entirety as elements for the units of first articulation of the "dominant" languages. It is certain, in any case, that the "underlying" languages offer their code as a part or element or model of decodification of the "dominant" languages.

We could, without the hesitations of specialists, venture the following TABLE:

UR-CODE, OR CODE OF CODES, OR CODE OF LIVED REALITY

Man, intent on life, caught in the cycle of pure pragmatism, continuously deciphers the language of Reality: the savage in the presence of an animal is in the presence of a "sign" of that language—if it is an edible animal, he kills it; if it is ferocious, he runs away, etc. Eating, running away, are other "signs" of that Language. Living, therefore, is expressing oneself through pragmatism, and said expression is nothing more than a moment of the monologue which Reality holds with itself concerning existence. In fact, both the eaten animal and the savage who eats it are part of the entire body of the Existing or of the Real, physically without a break in continuity.

CODE OF OBSERVED (OR CONTEMPLATED) REALITY

A man can be present during an action without living it as action: he can be a pure observer, either by necessity or by choice. In this case he lives the action through his contemplation. A man sees from far away a man who kills another man; he is a witness to the action, he is separate from it. Perhaps he is not aware of the detachment (*which is that of philosophy*): however, he lives the moment of awareness through which *Reality presents itself as Objectivity*—with the consequent birth of values, etc., etc. An important phenomenon in the decoding of Reality lived through observation is the illusion of the linearity of succession of events and, above all, the illusion that there are "moments" or "segments" of Reality.

THE CODE OF IMAGINED (OR INTERNALIZED) REALITY

Observed reality can be internalized and projected onto the screen of one's memory as recollection or as expectation. The illusion that

reality's objectivity is meant to be possessed, or conquered, or modified, or understood is accentuated, as is the illusion of its succession (the before and after: the past to be evaluated, the future to be programmed through nostalgia and fantasies, etc., etc.).

The code of Imagined Reality, with respect to the two preceding codes, foresees the possibility of "signs" that are deliberately distorted, modified, or bent according to its own design or will.

While in the Code of Observed Reality there is the principle of that which will be the code of philosophical jargon in written-spoken language, in the Code of Imagined Reality there is the principle of that which will be the code of artistic jargon in written-spoken language.

CODE OF REPRESENTED REALITY

In certain cases the quality of the observer and the quality of the observed are "normalized" or "conventionalized"; in this manner the observer becomes the spectator and the observed becomes the actor. The moment of life is lived as reciprocal spectacle. *This proves that there is no real dissociation between Expression and Representation.* The savage, too, in the moment in which he lives life as pure pragmatism, in the act in which he decodes the animal, in part lives reality as representation; the animal among the bushes or on the grass is a show. At the most recent stage of Reality as representation one finds the theater or staged fiction, whose code could not exist without all the preceding codes, in which it finds all its beginnings (in the act in which the spectator identifies with the actor he deciphers the antagonist by means of the Ur-code, the code of lived Reality; in the act in which he is a spectator in the staged fiction, he employs the code of Observed Reality, living it through contemplation; in the act in which he follows the succession of moments of events, he employs the Code of Imagined Reality; the philosophical and artistic elements which are pertinent to the urbane moment of the theatrical representation are, as we have seen, implicit in the last two codes).

CODE OF EVOKED (OR VERBAL) REALITY

The savage sees the animal and kills it (the Language of Action); a savage sees another savage who sees an animal and kills it (the Language of Observation); a savage imagines—or dreams—himself seeing an animal and killing it (the Language of Imagination).

The savage discovers oral language (and later written language—which will be a fundamental moment in the awareness of self). By means of this verbal language the savage tells another savage how he saw an animal and killed it.

The characteristic of this code of verbal Language is that of being

"symbolic and conventional," and therefore absolutely special when compared to the other codes; but also that of being "evocative."

Only because it is evocative can it be "currency of exchange"; what the encoder and decoder of verbal languages have in common *is not so much the verbal language as the lived world*. It is on the basis of the Ur-Code and its first derivatives that I, listening to a symbolic system of signs, understand what people want to say to me; *those signs are in fact nothing more than translations of other signs, and I have to retranslate them*. There can be no common language (communication) between two beings who belong to two different Realities: it would be pure arbitrariness and convention which would not evoke anything; that is, it would translate signs which in turn would be incomprehensible.

CODE OF PORTRAYED REALITY

To decode a painted or sculpted person or landscape we have to resort to a code in which all the precedents are present; indeed, only keeping in mind the more recent specific code of aesthetic decoding, in the presence of an altarpiece with characters, objects, animals, trees, we go in a flash back over all the steps of the codes listed above which are present at the same time. The loss of mobility is simply a metric restriction; in reality we perceive those characters as fixed in time and space, but not deprived of the principle of moving naturally in time and space—the archetypes of the more specialized aesthetic enjoyment (the golden brown of the skin of the Madonna, the fine powder of the evening diffused on the whole scene, etc.) are also found in the experience of Lived Reality, in the pragmatic and existential moment. Indeed, I would like to add: in Portrayed Reality, that is, at the aesthetic level, we tend to summarize or metaphorize all the signs-signifieds deciphered by means of the codes of the preceding languages. The Ur-Code, for example, serves to decode not only without the awareness of the operation, but without even the shadow of the awareness; it is pragmatism which decipheres pragmatism, and encoder and decoder belong to a same Body which endlessly reveals itself, repeatedly asserting that it is. There is an identification in the convention of the Code of Lived Reality between pragmatism and enigma. So much so that at any linguistic level, pragmatism and enigma are inseparable. The aesthetic moment normalizes this identification.

CODE OF PHOTOGRAPHED REALITY

It is a step backwards in the scale of maturity that we are venturing here in a purely ideal sense. In the presence of a photographic "document" one regresses from the level of linguistic awareness which determines the Code of Represented Reality and Portrayed

Reality. Here the contingent of the preceding Codes prevails, perhaps particularly that of Imagined Reality, which tends to fix the succession of reality—be it Lived or Contemplated—in segments, in fragments, in visions (photography is the extreme case of this). Photography is the extreme effort of the witness who tries to remember the detail of an action which he has witnessed without participating in it. It is, then, through the imagination that we engrave the photograph with what it lacks, that is, movement.

CODE OF TRANSMITTED (AUDIOVISUAL) REALITY

The television viewers who witnessed the casually "transmitted" death of the writer Mishima decoded the event by means of the Ur-code and the code of Observed Reality. The peculiarity of the code of Transmitted Reality consists of the always potentially present awareness of the mechanical medium of the transmission and therefore of the irreparable distance from the observed action. But we are already at a level of "*Parole*" and not of "*Langue*"; we find ourselves in fact in the presence of a concrete "television transmission," and not of the abstraction of television language. The latter, then, is theoretically even closer to the language of Lived Reality and to the Language of Observed Reality, so close that in essence it identifies with it. In sum, its code is essentially the Ur-code (the Japanese writer really did kill himself).

CODE OF REPRODUCED (AUDIOVISUAL) REALITY

The same comments made concerning Transmitted Reality could be made for Reproduced Reality, accentuating in the latter the characteristics of "*parole*" or of "artistic language," while the *Langue* to be inferred in abstract from its concrete realizations shades into the "*Langue*" of Lived Reality. Essentially its code is the Ur-code, modified through the passage across the various phases of awareness lined up schematically here.

It should be noted that while the Languages of not only lived Reality—and I refer especially to the aesthetic ones—have NEVER caused us to think of a Code of Codes, and therefore of Reality as a Language, this instead happened through the awareness of the Language of Transmitted Reality and the Language of Reproduced Reality. As one who sees himself for the first time in a mirror and realizes that he is *always* an image and not only in the mirror—not signified signifying "man," but signifying itself.

NOTE

The Code of Codes has a quality which belongs to it and which cannot be transmitted; that is, for every other derived code, Reality

presents itself as a succession, and furthermore, as completeness, while for the Code of Codes Reality is circularity and boundlessness. The savage—substantive im-sign—who, through action—verbal im-sign—kills the animal—substantive im-sign—in the absolute identification of pragmatism and enigma, lives Reality as Truth: not only philosophicoreligious Truth (the one of all the great interpretations of Reality), but also scientific Truth (the circularity of space and the relativity of time).

The savage does not need illusions *to live, that is, to express himself*. But from the moment in which he begins to live reality as contemplation (from the first glimmer of this), and therefore begins to invent its succession and spatiotemporality, he discovers history, that is, illusion. From that moment on he will always need it, and will therefore base on this, and only on this, the absence of authenticity: the alienation, first of the peasant, and later of the petit bourgeois.

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BIOGRAPHICAL GLOSSARY

- Alicata, Mario* (1918–1966), Communist Party intellectual and writer.
- Arbasino, Alberto* (1930–), avant-garde writer and journalist and member of Pasolini's circle of friends.
- Ascoli, Graziadio Isaia* (1829–1907), Professor of Linguistics and Oriental Languages at the University of Milan, was the first great modern Italian linguist.
- Baldelli, Ignazio* (1922–), linguist and critic, professor of the history of the Italian language at the University of Rome, and the author of numerous scholarly studies, among them *Dante e i poeti fiorentini del Duecento* (*Dante and the Florentine Poets of the Thirteenth Century*, 1968).
- Baldini, Gabriele* (1919–1969), professor and critic.
- Balestrini, Nanni* (1935–), avant-garde poet who has experimented with electronic and computer poetry. In 1963 he won the Ferro di Cavallo prize for the most experimental book of the year.
- Bally, Charles* (1865–1947), one of the editors of Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris, 1916), and the author of many works on linguistics.
- Banti, Anna* (1895–1985), art historian, novelist, and critic; former editor of the influential cultural journal *Paragone*. Her novel *Le donne muoiono* (*Women Die*, 1951) won the Viareggio Prize.
- Barbato, Andrea*, a writer for the weekly news magazine *Espresso*.
- Barthes, Roland* (1915–1980), one of the foremost French literary critics of his time, identified with structuralism and semiology.
- Bassani, Giorgio* (1916–), novelist of Ferrara, poet, editor for many years of the prestigious international journal *Botteghe Oscure*. Bassani is especially known for his novelistic depiction of the Jewish community of Ferrara, as in *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini* (*The Garden of the Finzi-Contini*, 1962).
- Bellezza, Dario* (1944–), poet and novelist, described by Pasolini in 1971 as "the best poet of the new generation."
- Ben Barka, Mehdi* (1921–1965), Moroccan leader of the leftist opposition in exile in Paris when, in October of 1965, he was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered by Moroccans acting in conjunction with agents of the French secret police and the underworld character Figon.
- Berto, Giuseppe* (1914–1978), neorealist novelist and playwright.
- Bertolucci, Attilio* (1911–), the poet and art critic, father of Bernardo, the filmmaker. Both father and son were friends of Pasolini.
- Bertolucci, Bernardo* (1941–), protégé of Pasolini who went on to direct his own films, most active in the seventies.
- Bertoni, Giulio* (1878–1942), literary critic and university professor.
- Betti, Laura* (1934–), movie actress and personal friend of Pasolini.
- Bevilacqua, Alberto* (1934–), traditional novelist.
- Bongiorno, Mike*, a popular Italian television personality, who has been the emcee of a number of quiz shows.

- Calvino, Italo* (1923–1985), a major figure in the contemporary Italian novel, an experimental writer in fantasy and fable as well as a satirist of the modern world.
- Cardarelli, Vincenzo* (1887–1959), poet, a founder of the traditional literary review *La Ronda* and from 1949 to 1959 editor of the important weekly *La fiera letteraria*.
- Cassola, Carlo* (1917–), popular and prolific novelist whose *La ragazza di Bube* (*Bube's Girl*, 1960) won the Strega Prize.
- Cattaneo, Carlo* (1801–1869), Democratic radical and historian, one of the political leaders of the five days of insurrection in Milan in 1848.
- Cecchi, Emilio* (1884–1966), influential journalist and art critic, a key interpreter of Anglo-American culture in Italy.
- Chiaromonte, Nicola*, well known professor and critic on political and literary subjects.
- Cicognani, Bruno* (1879–1972), lawyer and novelist, author of two important novels of his period, *La Velia* (1922) and *Villa Beatrice* (1931), in the tradition of nineteenth-century naturalism.
- Citati, Pietro* (1930–), critic, writer, and friend of Pasolini. Citati often reviewed Pasolini's work.
- Coccioli, Carlo* (1920–), novelist.
- Colombo, Emilio*, Christian Democratic politician, was prime minister (1970–1972) and a leader of the Dorotei centrist faction of the party.
- Contini, Gianfranco* (1912–), influential scholar of romance philology, professor first at the University of Fribourg and then at the University of Florence. He is the author of numerous books and has been editor of the journal *Studies in Italian Philology* (1958–1963).
- Croce, Benedetto* (1866–1952), the dominant Italian philosopher and literary critic of his epoch, whose doctrine of art as intuition-expression was highly influential in Italy.
- Dallamano, Piero*, journalist, especially associated with the Roman daily *Paese Sera*.
- D'Annunzio, Gabriele* (1863–1938), writer influenced by end-of-the-century decadence and Nietzsche's idea of the superman. A poet and dramatist, he became a writer of major prestige in Italy between 1900 and 1915.
- Da Ponte, Lorenzo* (1749–1838), poet and librettist for Mozart and one of the first professors of Italian in the United States.
- D'Arco Avalle, Silvio* (1920–), critic, romance philologist, professor, especially known for his structuralist readings of medieval texts.
- Davoli, Ninetto* (1948–), Pasolini's protégé and companion, who appears in many of his films.
- De Gasperi, Alcide* (1881–1954), the first Christian Democratic prime minister (1945–1953) in the postwar Italian republic. A moderate, he resisted powerful pressures from the Vatican and the United States to outlaw the Communists and Socialists and exclude any non-Catholic party from government.
- Delfini, Antonio* (1908–1963), prose writer.
- De Martino, Ernesto* (1908–1965), anthropologist and author of *Naturalismo e storicismo nell'etnologia* (*Naturalism and Historicism in Ethnology*, 1941), *Il mondo magico* (*The Magic World*, 1948), and *Furore, simbolo, valore* (*Furor, Symbol, Value*, 1962).
- De Sica, Vittorio* (1901–1974), actor and director, one of the early figures of postwar Neorealism in Italian cinema.
- Dossi, Carlo* (1849–1910), journalist and writer.

- Duse, Eleonora* (1859–1924), famous Italian theater actress known for a beautiful speaking voice.
- Eco, Umberto* (1932–), professor, journalist, semiotician, and most recently author of the best-selling novel *Il nome della rosa* (*The Name of the Rose*). In "The Code of Codes," pp. 276–83, Pasolini addresses some points of Eco's semiotics. The two writers had a number of exchanges in newspapers, journals, and other public forums.
- Eisenstein, Sergei* (1898–1948), Soviet director known for his use of dialectical montage.
- Emanuelli, Enrico* (1909–), journalist, novelist, and foreign correspondent of the Turinese newspaper *La Stampa* for many years.
- Evtushenko, Evgeny* (1933–), Russian poet popular in the West during the sixties.
- Facoetti, Mario*, young poet whose work was selected by Pasolini to appear in *Nuovi Argomenti* in 1968.
- Fanon, Franz* (1925–1961), black psychiatrist from Martinique who wrote about the psychological effects of colonialism on native populations in *Les damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961) and other works.
- Fellini, Federico* (1921–), major director of Italian postwar cinema. Pasolini worked with him on the screenplay of *The Nights of Cabiria* (1957).
- Ferreri, Marco* (1928–), Italian director.
- Forman, Miloš* (1932–), Czech film director well known in the West during the sixties and now a Hollywood director.
- Fortini, Franco* (1917–), poet, editor, writer, and critic who later disputed a number of issues with Pasolini.
- Foucault, Michel* (1926–1984), professor of philosophy at the Collège de France and perhaps the most celebrated French intellectual of his time. His wide-ranging interdisciplinary work attempts to "uncover the deepest strata of Western culture."
- Gadda, Carlo Emilio* (1893–1973), engineer and novelist, who developed a unique literary language making use of dialectal and other elements. His novel *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (*That Awful Mess on Via Merulana*, 1957) is sometimes considered to occupy a similar position in modern Italian literature to Joyce's *Ulysses* in English literature.
- Garboli, Cesare* (1928–), poet and literary critic widely published in periodicals.
- Garruba, Fabio*, young poet whose work was selected by Pasolini to appear in *Nuovi Argomenti* in 1968.
- Giacomo, Salvatore di* (1860–1934), poet, author of dialect poetry, and in prose a follower of Verga's naturalism.
- Giotti, Virgilio*, pseudonym of the poet *Virgilio Schönbeck* (1885–1957), author of lyric poetry and tales in the dialect of Trieste.
- Glauber Rocha* (1938–1981), auteur Brazilian director.
- Godard, Jean-Luc* (1930–), New Wave French film director noted for his political films of the sixties.
- Goldmann, Lucien* (1913–1970), Roumanian Marxist sociologist who came to Paris in 1934 and later became Director of Studies at the École

- Pratique des Hautes Études. His work on literature was especially well known.
- Gramsci, Antonio* (1891–1937), the fundamental theoretician of Italian socialism and one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party. Gramsci was condemned to twenty years imprisonment by the Fascists and ultimately died as a result of this experience.
- Gurvitch, Georges* (1894–1965), Russian who succeeded to the chair of Emile Durkheim at the Sorbonne, originator of phenomenological sociology.
- Hayden, Tom*, leading theoretician and spokesman of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) in the early sixties. He also served as a liaison to SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee).
- Hjelmlev, Louis* (1899–1965), influential Danish linguist whose glossematics grew out of certain Saussurean theses.
- Husserl, Edmund* (1859–1938), professor of philosophy at Gottingen and Freiburg; founder of the school of phenomenology.
- Ingrao, Pietro* (1915–), an important postwar generation Communist leader who has been speaker of the Chamber of Deputies.
- Jakobson, Roman* (1896–1982), Moscow-born linguist associated with the Prague Linguistic Circle belonging to the functionalist wing of Saussurean linguistics and with the Russian Formalist School. He taught at numerous American universities and wrote widely and influentially on linguistics.
- Lefebvre, Henri* (1905–), French Marxist philosopher.
- Leonetti, Francesco* (1924–), poet and early editor of *Officina* with Roversi and Pasolini.
- Lerch, Eugen* (1888–), philologist and linguist.
- Levi, Carlo* (1902–1975), physician and author of one of the masterpieces of modern Italian prose, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (*Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 1945), a work that grew out of his Fascist-imposed exile in Calabria.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude* (1908–), French structural anthropologist who holds the chair of Social Anthropology at the Collège de France.
- Lombard, Alf* (1902–), linguist.
- Longhi, Roberto* (1890–1970), a prominent art historian and one of Pasolini's intellectual mentors; he was a professor at the University of Bologna for whom Pasolini considered writing a thesis.
- Luzi, Mario* (1895–), poet and scholar, is the most significant of the hermetics in the generation after Montale and Ungaretti.
- Machado, Antonio* (1875–1939), major Spanish poet and man of letters, an opponent of Franco during the Spanish Civil War.
- Malagodi, Giovanni* (1904–), leader of the conservative Italian Liberal Party from 1954 until he was forced out of power when the party became more progressive after the 1975 elections. Malagodi was identified with the interests of big business.
- Malanga, Jerry*, actor with the Living Theater of Julian Beck and Judith Malina.
- Mantovani, Oddo*, young poet whose work was chosen by Pasolini to appear in *Nuovi Argomenti* in 1968.

- Manzoni, Alessandro* (1785–1873) is celebrated for his masterpiece, the novel *I promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed*, 1825–27).
- Marcuse, Herbert* (1898–1979), radical thinker and professor of philosophy at the University of California at San Diego and the author of numerous books.
- Martinet, Andre* (1908–), linguist of the Saussurean functionalist school; author of many influential texts.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice* (1908–1961), professor of philosophy at the Collège de France and associate of Sartre's at *Les temps modernes* for a period of time. He followed Husserl's lead as a phenomenologist.
- Metz, Christian*, major film semiologist and author of a number of books. His *Film Language* (1974) addresses some of Pasolini's ideas directly.
- Milani, Don Lorenzo* (1923–1967), Florentine priest, writer, and educator prominent in the revolt within the Italian Catholic Church.
- Mishima, Yukio* (1925–1970), internationally recognized Japanese novelist and dramatist, who committed suicide in the traditional manner of *hara-kiri*.
- Mizoguchi, Kenji* (1898–1956), major Japanese director whose *Ugetsu Monogatari* is much admired in the West.
- Morante, Elsa* (1918–1986), novelist, poet, winner of the Strega Prize in 1957 for *L'Isola di Arturo* (*Arthur's Island*).
- Moravia, Alberto* (1907–), novelist and man of letters who has had a long and productive career, including an international reputation. His novels of middle-class satire and intellectual alienation have made him a major figure among modern Italian novelists. He was a close personal friend and early supporter of Pasolini.
- Moro, Aldo* (1916–1978), was secretary of the majority Christian Democratic party (1959–1963), prime minister (1963–1968), and leader of the centrist Dorotei faction of his party (1959–1978). Known for creating the "opening on the left" in Italian politics, he was kidnapped and assassinated by the Red Brigade, a terrorist group active in the 1970s.
- Murdock, George Peter* (1897–) American anthropologist.
- Noventa, Giacomo* (1898–1960), poet and essayist imprisoned under Fascism who wrote romantic poetry in the Venetian dialect.
- Olmi, Ermanno* (1931–1984), Italian documentary and neorealistic filmmaker.
- Ottieri, Ottiero* (1924–), Roman novelist and essayist.
- Pajetta, Gian-Carlo* (1911–), an important Communist politician of the generation after Togliatti.
- Panzini, Alfred* (1863–1939), novelist and teacher, author of a number of unremarkable traditional novels.
- Petrolini, Ettore* (1886–1936), major Italian comic actor of theater and film.
- Pirandello, Luigi* (1867–1936), foremost Italian twentieth century dramatist and a seminal figure of modernist literature.
- Ponti, Carlo* (1913–), a major Italian film producer.
- Prisco, Michele* (1920–), a traditional novelist.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain* (1922–), French scientist turned novelist, the leading theoretician and practitioner of the New Novel.
- Rossellini, Roberto* (1906–1977), film director and one of the founders of postwar Italian Neorealism.

- Roversi, Roberto* (1923–), poet and one of the founders, with Pasolini, of the journal *Officina* (*Workshop*).
- Saba, Umberto* (1883–1957), poet of natural humanity and simplicity who identified the work of the poet in the ordinary life of man; author of *Scorciatoie e Raccontini* (*Shortcuts and Little Tales*, 1946) and an *Autobiografia* (1924).
- Sanguineti, Edoardo* (1930–), prominent avant-garde poet and professor at the University of Salerno, with close ties to French experimental writers.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de* (1857–1913), seminal thinker in modern linguistics whose ideas inform the work of numerous scholars and disciplines. His *Course in General Linguistics* (1916) is based on student notes from courses given at the University of Geneva, where he taught for many years.
- Segre, Cesare* (1928–), professor of philology at the University of Pavia and president of the International Association for Semiotic Studies.
- Sereni, Vittorio* (1913–1983), critic, influential editor at the Milanese publishing house of Mondadori, poet, and translator.
- Soffici, Ardengo* (1879–1964), painter, critic, poet, and former art critic for *La Voce*, who became a leading exponent of futurism although later, under fascism, he turned conservative.
- Soldati, Mario* (1906–), novelist, journalist, screenwriter and director, whose novel *Lettere da Capri* (*The Capri Letters*, 1954) received the Strega Prize. Soldati is known for his influential description of his experience in the United States, *America, primo amore* (*America, First Love*, 1935).
- Spitzer, Leo* (1887–1960), was a German romance philologist influenced by Croce and also a representative of stylistic criticism.
- Straub, Jean-Marie* (1933–), French New Wave film director.
- Sue, Eugène* (1804–1857), popular French novelist identified with sensationalism and melodrama in his most famous novels, *The Mysteries of Paris* and *The Wandering Jew*.
- Terracini, Umberto* (1895–1983), a founder of the Italian Communist Party, jailed under fascism (1926–1943), and one of the three signers of the postwar Italian Constitution.
- Tessa, Delio* (1886–1939), Milanese dialect poet.
- Togliatti, Palmiro* (1893–1964), leader of the Italian Communist Party from Gramsci's arrest in 1927 until 1964. During a long period of political exile he worked directly under Stalin, who influenced him greatly.
- Torres, Camillo*, Colombian Jesuit who joined the guerrilla movement and was killed by government forces in 1965.
- Totò* (1897–1967), Italian comedian, music hall performer, and film actor, who worked in several Pasolini films.
- Ungaretti, Giuseppe* (1888–1970), poet influenced by the French Symbolists and by Futurism who became a central figure of Hermeticism.
- Valeri Manera, Mario* (1921–), industrialist and patron of the arts, founder of the Campiello literary prize.
- Verga, Giovanni* (1840–1922), Sicilian novelist whose Italian version of naturalism is called *verismo*. His most famous novel, *I Malavoglia* (1881), has been translated as *The House under the Medlar Tree*.

Vigorelli, Giancarlo (1913–), journalist and literary critic for the weekly *Il Tempo*.

Visconti, Luchino (1906–1976), major director of Italian postwar cinema.

Vittorini, Elio (1908–1966), novelist, translator, critic, and enthusiastic Americanist. Vittorini founded and directed two controversial journals, *Il Politecnico* (1945–1947) and *Il Menabò* (1959–1967); he was one of the major figures of the post-World War II generation of Italian writers.

Vogt, Karl (1817–1895), German zoologist and evolutionist.

Volponi, Paolo (1924–), novelist, poet, and friend of Pasolini. He won the Viareggio Prize in 1960.

Vossler, Karl (1872–1949), German Romance philologist and neoidealist linguist in the school of Croce.

Zhdanov, Andrei Aleksandrovich (1896–1948), Soviet army general and Politburo member who was responsible for the Stalinist hard line on culture.

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