

Cinematic transformations of poetic language: Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*

Pier Paolo Pasolini was already an established poet and writer before venturing into filmmaking, and embraced cinema as more than just a different literary technique. Cinema for Pasolini was a new expressive medium, a unique language, a trans-national language that allowed him to abandon the Italian language imposed upon Italy under fascist rule. He rejected the prominence of capitalistic bourgeois ideals in Italian society, whereby the existence of dialects was shunned due to the association of dialect with lower social classes.

By contrast, Pasolini's films, especially his early films and writings, are marked by a distinct focus on style and ideology expressed through the use of dialect. In the 1965 essay "The cinema of poetry" (*Il cinema di poesia*) Pasolini endeavours to provide a theoretical framework for the expressive aesthetic intuition demonstrated by filmmakers, including Pasolini himself. Pasolini discusses the formal character of shot composition and construction in films of the time (including films by Michelangelo Antonioni, Bernardo Bertolucci and Jean-Luc Godard) and labels such stylistic filmmaking 'poetic'. Utilising the constructs of 'im-signs' and 'free indirect subjectivity' as derived by Pasolini in his essay, this paper provides a discussion of Pasolini's own 'poetic cinema' exemplified in his second directorial feature *Mamma Roma*, made in 1962.

More specifically, this paper provides a discussion of the use of linguistic markers in the representation of the sub-proletariat class living in the impoverished *borgate* of Rome. Pasolini's representation of such marginalised characters is unique for the way in which the constructs of the Italian filmmaking tradition of neo-realism (such as the use of non-professional actors to present ordinary people and their lives) are inverted in the creation of Pasolini's 'alternative' realism in the representation of extra-ordinary protagonists. In *Mamma Roma*, Pasolini incorporates a distinctively 'poetic' expression by the framing and composition of shots allusive to various Italian Renaissance paintings. Pasolini's use of dialect and characteristic mannerisms are also discussed to explain how the protagonists of *Mamma Roma* are situated within a subordinate world of their own, where all roads present an impasse that prevents the desperately miserable protagonists from entering into the wider world of bourgeois society.