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**NATIONAL COLLEGE of ART and DESIGN**

**FACULTY : FINE ART  
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## **LOOKING BACK**

**FELLINI, BERTOLUCCI, and THE TAVIANI BROTHERS in relation to  
ROSSELLINI**

**by**

**CATHERINE TERESA KELLY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**



In the 1970's Italy was threatened by the collapse of law and order. On December 12, 1969, a bomb exploded at Piazza Fontana in Milan, followed five years later by terrorist bombings in Brescia on May 28th, 1974. In August of the same year a bomb planted on the Florence-Bologna express killed innocent commuters. Then on March 16th, 1978, the Red Brigade kidnapped and later assassinated Aldo Moro, the president of the Christian Democratic party and former Prime Minister. It might have seemed that the democratic government in Italy was failing, and that the appointment of a dictator or some similar authoritarian ruler was appropriate to deal with the situation. It is proposed that in this climate four Italian directors made three films that had a direct correspondence with two post-war films by the neorealist director Roberto Rossellini. Bernardo Bertolucci made The Conformist in 1970. Federico Fellini, who had lived in a Fascist governed Italy up to 1945, made Amarcord in 1973, and Paolo and Vittorio Taviani made The Night of San Lorenzo in 1982. Each of them addressed in greater depth, but in very different ways, the reality of their civil history and not the myth, as Roberto Rossellini had addressed in his 1940's films. Bertolucci (born 1940) and the Taviani brothers were only boys at the end of the war when Rome Open City (1945) and Paisa (1946) were made. Rossellini sought to find a new cinematic language capable of dealing with the pressing problems of the times. He worked in a combination of styles and moods ranging from the use of documentary footage to the most blatant melodrama addressing the moral and psychological issues arising out of post-war Italy, the consequences of occupation, the Resistance and the Partisan struggle, and the inherent contradictions within that struggle. In the context of their time and in the post-war conditions in which these films were made his achievement was astonishing. Rome Open City and especially Paisa made Rossellini a central founding figure of neorealism.

Neorealism never had a manifesto, rather it depended upon a moral imperative that generated an aesthetic difference, and the working conditions of the time in which it emerged contributed to how the films were made and how they looked. The anti-rhetorical stance of neorealism was set against pre-war cinema, but the greatest revolution was in the subject matter where the social content of the themes reflected the historical situation. The neorealists rejected traditional dramatic and cinematic conventions. The use of location shooting and natural lighting accentuated the 'real' element in their works by giving them an almost documentary quality. By using long shots, and depth of focus as opposed to the use of classical editing or the montage of Eisenstein, (Marcus, 1986. p 22) these films attempted to reflect real time and record what "was". Furthermore, stars were replaced by non-professional actors. Also it was





difficult to get film at that time and to some extent that accounts for the graininess of the images and sudden changes in light. The social realist dimension, so often given pre-eminence in the discussion about neorealism, did not always take into account the search of neorealist directors for a new cinematic language to describe the contemporary reality of the day. It is worth noting that only 10% of Italian post war film production was in the neorealist style, and many of these were box-office failures. Yet, despite neorealism becoming labelled as an 'art' cinema, it had profound effects on the future of film making.

Arguably Paisa is more of a neorealist film, yet Rome Open City, directed by Roberto Rossellini and co-scripted by Federico Fellini, was seen as a breakthrough in terms of a neorealist attitude, and was conventionally considered to be the founding film of the movement. Rome Open City was an account of a city at the time when the film was made, and was made in reaction to the Nazi occupation. Rossellini was not some earnest and ardent maker of propagandist film, rather he was a playboy, with a love of living who had a passion for cinema. In the 30's he developed quite a strong career in the associated development of the cinema of Fascist Italy. By 1938 he had become an assistant director well before he made Rome Open City 1945, and he had joined a group of film makers, cinephiles based around a magazine called "Cinema". "Cinema" was edited by Mussolini's son, Vittorio, and a group of people working at Cinecitta who worked on films that were propagandist in nature, and dealt with heroes of the Fascist state. Rossellini's films from that period included A Pilot Returns (1938), White Ship (1941), and Man with the Cross (1942). This film was the last film made by Rossellini before he rejected Fascist ideology. There is no doubt that several of such Fascist films would probably now be described as neorealist. They were shot on location, and they dealt with real lives of groups of people. Despite the fact that they were promoting their own particular ideology, they were dealing with a reality that was the Italy of the period.

In the first part of this century Italy rivalled anywhere else in the world in terms of cinematic achievement and technical excellence. In the 1930s, Cinecitta was the biggest studio centre in Europe. Mussolini had put in place an important school for training in film, the Centro Sperimentale de Cinematografia, which opened in 1935. Italy probably had the strongest European industry in comparison to the Hollywood of the 30s and 40s. It was from this platform, this very strong base, that neorealism developed. However the overall view of neorealism is something that came from a broken industry that lacked financial support, and that perhaps did not have too many ideas. In 1945 Rossellini was an experienced director, who could call on contacts in the film industry. These were





skilled technicians and scriptwriters with considerable experience in a Fascist cinema with a realist tradition.

The common public perception of Italian Cinema was that of glossy glamorous domestic melodramas sometimes referred to as the white telephone comedies. So Rome Open City was a surprise to the rest of Europe and America. Although Rossellini was opposed to an entertainment commercially driven cinema he must have been conscious of how attractive some of his subjects could be to his 1940's audience. Rome Open City was a film with a female German officer who encouraged treachery, not only through her lesbianism, but also through her use of drugs as bribes. The Italian police were portrayed during a German raid on a block of Roman flats, as less than responsible and more interested in looking up the skirts of the women on the stairs than actually capturing the partisans being hunted. None of this takes from the engagement Rossellini achieved with that particular historical period. Through cinematic artifice and a new set of conventions Rome Open City captured the plight of the ordinary Italian in a seemingly straightforward and uncomplicated way. The film was a huge commercial success, and in turn it became an influence on certain film makers.

Based on real life, Rome Open City focused on three days of the resistance struggle in the lives of some simple characters. Manfredi, a communist resistance leader and Don Pietro, a catholic parish priest, were portrayed united against the Nazis. The film constructed an optimistic account of what might have been possible if the unity that held such opposites together against Fascism could have continued to unite the different parties in the reconstruction of Italy. Rossellini's characters were working class and true to life. Manfredi's former girl-friend Marina betrays him to the Gestapo leader Bergman. Francesco, who was Manfredi's friend, lived in the raided block of flats with Pina, a working-class woman who was expecting his child.

The claim is made for neorealism that it was about authenticity. Rome Open City was shot on location using wide shots, and long shots making it very much about the collective street, and in the Po Delta sequence in Paisa the technique of shooting below the level of the reeds brought to life the character of the landscape, and what it took to survive in it (Fig.1 p.9). Neorealism used non-professional actors to try and achieve a sense of spontaneity. Whilst there are non-professionals in the film, professionals are in the leading roles, and they give star performances. Rossellini used interior shots with



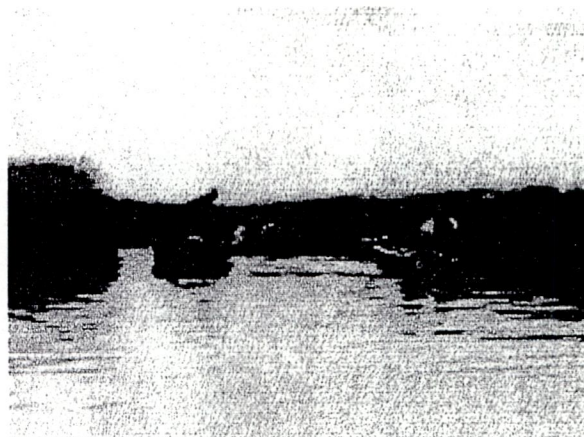


Fig.1. Paisa (1946)





lighting effects similar to that in a Hollywood suspense thriller or a 30's melodrama. He also filmed in the actual streets and houses of the recently liberated city. However coming out of the tradition he did, Rossellini may well have chosen to organise the sets in the buildings of the locality. The sound was dubbed over the film because in Italy at that time it was the normal procedure. In post-war Rome, Rossellini used 35mm newsreel stock as it was all he could get, and his mastery was in using it to the best effect. He documented how the German occupation had effected every aspect of the lives of Roman citizens, young and old, and how the Gestapo had permeated the Fascist Regime. Throughout the film, Rossellini enveloped us in the contradictory styles of reportage, melodrama and farce. In one scene, where Rossellini maintains a tension by unnaturalistic cutting back and forth between the priest's effort to protect the young partisans, and the Nazi search of the building, Don Pietro hid partisan guns under Pina's father's sick-bed. At the end of the Nazi raid the spectator was made aware that Don Pietro had knocked the old man out with a pan to quieten him. Again in a later scene the opposition of the moods in the two rooms leading off Bergman's office added a dimension of horror, a torture chamber on one side and an entertainment room on the other complete with music and creature comforts. To add a further twist a Nazi officer was so reasonable whilst drunk in the room off Bergman's office, when he reasoned with Bergman and appeared sympathetic to the Italian desire for liberty. Ironically the next morning the same officer commanded the firing squad that executed Don Pietro. It was part of Rossellini's artifice to unite Communist and Catholic as part of his agenda to show the way forward, as here his focus is spiritual rather than political. Both Don Pietro and Manfredi were executed, the communist tortured and tied up like a Christ figure. (Fig. 2 p.11) This contrasts strongly with Don Pietro who was shot whilst tied to a chair.

Rossellini simplified the Italian stereotypes he portrayed. For his German characters, Bergman, is both homosexual and ruthlessly cruel. His assistant Ingrid was a predatory lesbian who plied the weak Marina with presents and drugs. His resistance fighters and parish priest were figures who provided consolation as well as generating self-examination. Italians had to come to terms with twenty years of Fascist Rule, as they had to have been implicated in their own difficult history. By shooting the film on the locations where the events on which the film was based occurred, the City itself became a major part of the film. Following the execution of Don Pietro, Rossellini's final scene was to mean something for what was to come after it. The boys who had formed their







Fig. 2. Rome Open City 1945.





own resistance group are shown filing down the hill overlooking the Eternal City, walking towards their future (App.1 fig. 1 p. 47).

In Paisa, Rossellini seemed to want to understand and analyse the events of the war as experienced by the Italian people and how they were implicated in such a horror. This stance was opposed to the grand and mythologised over-view that one might have expected in a Hollywood version. Rossellini emphasised how the ordinary men and women seemed to lack control over the major movers that were affecting them so cruelly, and how the cultural differences experienced during the war make understanding of common humanity so difficult. Using extracts from actual newsreels and maps describing the positions to which the authoritative voice-over referred, Rossellini traced the Allied advance up the Italian Peninsula from its landing in Sicily in 1943 to its liberation in 1945. What unified the film is the flat feeling of disillusion produced by the wartime experience, imaged unflinchingly. The uniting factor between the disparate cultures (American, British and Italian) was again the common struggle against a Fascist enemy. By exploring simple human themes in six episodes set in different regions of Italy, Rossellini examined the disastrous effects two alien (Italian and American) cultures had on each other. Simultaneously individuals within these cultures were seen taking steps towards doing something about themselves.

Perhaps it is in the ambiguous fifth episode of Paisa which was set in a Monastery that the cultures clash utterly. In a world untouched by war, or by anything in two hundred years, the monks welcomed three army chaplains, one Jewish, one protestant and a catholic. On discovering that two of the chaplains were not catholic, the monks refused to eat with them in the hope that by fasting they would hasten their conversion. This only served to underline the huge dichotomy between the two cultures. The American chaplain Martin did not see this as irrational as he understood the Italian culture and he praised their sincerity.

"I have found here that peace of mind I had lost in the horrors and the trials  
of the war, a beautiful, moving lesson of humility, simplicity, and pure faith".

(Bondanella, 1993. p.48)

Rossellini intentionally presented us with this ironic and ambiguous episode. One must wonder whether the monks are acting out of religious sincerity or religious intolerance and bigotry, or whether it serves to illustrate the unacceptable position of a Church that



was abandoning its flock. The Lateran Treaty<sup>1</sup> in effect enabled the Church in Rome to exclude itself from the dangers of war. Far from involving itself in the way Dale did in the Delta scene in Paisa, it withdrew to safety, like a father abandoning a child. Federico Fellini is credited with this characterisation of the monks in this apparently mild anecdotal episode where he criticises the Church's position in 1940's Italy.

Introduction footnote.

1. The Lateran Treaty of February 1929 is a concordat between the kingdom of Italy and the Holy See that recognizes the (papal) State called Vatican City.



## **Chapter One**

**FEDERICO FELLINI**





In 1945/46 when Rossellini undertook to represent post-war Italian society he was concerned with the need to unite different aspects of Italian culture and politics to help create a united Italy from an obviously very divided society. He was also searching for a new cinematic style that would enable him to contribute to his country's new value system by minimising the difficult aspects of Italian history in this period of crisis. Rossellini portrayed stereotypical characters to validate his views. Thirty years later Fellini undertook to review conventional accounts of Italian post war history in a way that reflected Rossellini's interests but more than that, Fellini grasped the essence of the disordered post war society in an entirely different way than his former teacher and director had.

Fellini had been an actor, a cartoonist, a creator of television commercials, a gagman, a journalist and a film scriptwriter. All of these traits were evident in his directoral skills. His surreal world of images were peculiar to him and bore no relation to the cinematic realism of Rossellini. Amarcord addressed the issue of Italian conformity in Italy's collective past, and how Fellini himself was part of that. Through complex and non-didactic storytelling, the spectator was drawn in to recognising the absolutely disastrous effects of not having grown up. His quick characaturist's eye strips away any distracting information that would allow the film to be read in any way other the one Fellini intended. Fellini sought complete freedom in his medium for himself and for his fellows from anything that restricted development. His anti-realist dream sequences illustrated the collective brainless mass that a community became if they abdicated personal responsibility and conformed to mass ideologies calculated to reduce them to stupidity, while his satire of the structures that worked together to maintain the *status quo* were utterly hilarious, succinct, and revealing.

Federico Fellini worked with Rossellini in different capacities but especially as a scriptwriter in a number of neorealist films including both Rome Open City and Paisa. Finding the critical label of his neorealist origins too confining Fellini evolved beyond the ideologically committed cinema of "realism" (Bondanella, 1993. p.113). He threw away the neorealist aspiration of portraying the real in a documentary way. Always acknowledging Rossellini as his teacher he himself moved towards a cinema of personal "self expression which he felt could communicate any kind of artistic message provided it was honestly felt" (Bondanella, 1992. p.47).



In 1973 Fellini made Amarcord in which he uncovered "the psychological and emotional manner of being a fascist" (Bondanella, 1993. p.249). Unlike Rossellini whose characters in Rome Open City were stereotypes of good (anti-fascist) heroes, and evil villains (fascist), Fellini's fascists share the same "arrested development" of all the individuals in this town.

The number of recurring group activities in Amarcord had an accumulative affect of clearly portraying how a whole community accepted in an unquestioning way the ideologies in place in Italy's post war period. The burning of a witch's effigy on a *fogarazza*, (a great bonfire on St. Joseph's day on March 19th to celebrate the arrival of the spring), the fascist celebration of the mythical foundation of Rome on April 21st (fig. 3 p.20), and the townspeople's great night vigil to catch a glimpse of the passing of the Rex all have a great levelling effect. The ideological values depicted in Amarcord were set in place by the State, the Church, the schools, and the media all promoting a way of thinking of what should be the norm, where the common consent of the characters created a self policing and self perpetuating system. He ridiculed how the characters all acted collectively to maintain the system that denied freedom to the individual in private as well as in public, and which seemed such an obstacle to human development. Fellini implicated Italian Society across the board in its' fascist history, where the whole ethos rendered the average Italian incapable of thinking independently through repression. The populace chose to be led by authority in any form rather than taking responsibility for themselves.

Fellini used non professional actors in the *mise en scene* that left them an indistinguishable part of the group. This neorealist approach was also reflected in De Sica's refusal to accept finance for the neorealist masterpiece Bicycle Thieves in 1948. The condition that he accepted Cary Grant in the lead role was unacceptable to him as he considered Cary Grant's star status would not have allowed the character he played to blend in. The neorealists set out to portray the ordinary citizen.

Although the town of Amarcord is not really Rimini, it is a combination of memories and imaginings informed by growing up in Rimini, and the film reflected Fellini's understanding of an Italian provincial town. He made the very town of Amarcord a character in his film (App.1 fig.4 p.50), just as Rossellini made Rome a character in Rome Open City (See App.1 fig.1 p.47) and the landscape a character in the Po Delta sequence in Paisa. (Fig.1 p.9).





In Rome Open City and Paisa Rossellini skipped over the notion of collaboration which allowed the excuse that it was not the ordinary member of Italian society who had contributed to Italian history but rather it was some higher force they were not accountable for, or exceptionally disordered people that normal people would not be expected to relate to. Unlike Rossellini Fellini was not prepared to mythologise Italy's history. Fascism dominated Italy for over two decades, and Fellini was not prepared to sweep that aside by suggesting that this was because Italy was a nation of sexual deviates, and was not prepared to accept the ideological argument that the Fascist movement was a tool of agrarian or industrial capitalism that set out to suppress the working class (Bondanella, 1992. p.266) reflecting the Marxist debate that the publishing of Gramsci's Prison Notebooks sparked off.

Italian national traits were highlighted in Amarcord. The idiosyncrasies Fellini satirised appeared amusing in individuals, but became utterly transformed, when harnessed in a politically motivated and unthinking crowd. Amarcord's characters seemed suspended in an unending adolescence, and Fellini suggested that their infantile mentality was exploited by the fascists on a national level, by herding them into a malleable force through terrorising them with either real force or bombastic rhetoric, as shown in the sequences at the horrible police station, and at the Federale's parade.

In Rome Open City Rossellini's partisan hero had taken an anti-rhetorical stance when under torture he had not broken down as the Gestapo officer had predicted, nor had he gone in for long speeches. Fellini recognised that it was the Italian love of rhetoric, and its status as an accomplishment that had made it such a powerful tool when used by the Fascists. He himself used the direct addresses of his actors to introduce the many narrational layers in Amarcord.

The layers of varied narratives in Amarcord provided the spectator with several perspectives from which to evaluate the visual information on the screen, as it was not the unified world of a few principle characters. Several narrators present obviously unreliable points of view from many subjective positions. In a mixture of voice overs and direct addresses to the camera Fellini called attention to the artificial cinematic quality of the work of art being watched.

Fellini's cinema was one of illusion which referred itself to cinematic forms in other films thus leading to the questioning of form itself, as when satirising the oriental dream of



pleasure in a Hollywood musical in Amarcord. The notion of fabulous happiness in a Hollywood setting was questioned when *The Prince*, obviously a Hollywood stereotype from a musical, was entertained by Gradisca in a flashback shown to explain the lawyer's explanation of how she got her name (Gradisca means welcome). The characters were very unrealistic as they appeared to be on a stage, and they stopped in their tracks inexplicably with the effect of distancing the viewer from the film as it looked so artificial. Another adventure in the Grand Hotel is pure Hollywood musical. In it Biscein described his adventures with members of a harem. Its transparent falseness undermined the position of Hollywood as an external model of happiness current in Amarcord's culture. The behaviour of these figures seemed to "epitomise the out of date notions of women established by men in a traditional male dominated society in an era of social conformity" (Bondanella, 1993. p.245).

Traditional structures within the patriarchal society of post war Italy were exposed as unhappy compromises. Fellini's analysis of matrimony is truly bitter-sweet where expectations were unclear and isolation and disappointment were the inevitable result of such institutions. In the kitchen in Amarcord the camera was in the place of a character confronting a travesty of the consolations of family life (App.1 fig. 2 p.48). The honest hardworking father Aurelio was trapped supporting an extended family including his wife Miranda's useless brother, his elderly father, and his institutionalised mad brother. He seemed to derive no sense of joy from his children, as his two sons irritated him excessively. But the viewer was left saddened by feeling that his irrational rages were really meant for his brother-in-law Lallo, and his paternal fear that Titta, his teenage son, might grow up as useless as his wife's brother.

Aurelio's wife Miranda was placed in a maternal role as the archetypal Italian mother. She kept a doll on her bed that seemed to symbolise her simple concerns. Volpina's character, the town's nymphomaniac, and the tobacconist who 'toyed' with Titta, were vulgar simplifications. Volpina especially was a figure of uncontrollable sexuality in Lacanian terms who chose her sexually dependent position within the male discourse as the "object of the male gaze" (Kolker, 1985 p.226) and she seemed to get a perverse satisfaction in being humiliated, while on the other hand Gradisca projected herself as a Hollywood movie star, unable to feel lovable for what she was. Fellini's critique of women did not develop any further after he made Amarcord. His other works seemed to cross the fine line between satire and indulgence.





Within the small nucleus of Miranda and Aurelio's typical family unit one can see examples of misdirected sexuality based on an arrested state of psychological development that affected the whole society from the cradle to the grave. The elderly grandfather seemed to live in a world of sexual fantasy. Lallo, Miranda's brother, justified his existence by acting out the part of a desirable male, based on a notion of his sexual prowess and desirability, while Titta's whole existence seemed to revolve around misadventures whose origins lie in his infatuation with Gradisca, an older woman. Actually, the whole town seemed to share his infatuation.

The film may not have been an intellectual analysis, but it certainly was a critical view of provincial life in post-war Italy. By alternatively poetic, farcical, fantastic and downright vulgar means Fellini involves the spectator in a complex mix of storytelling styles that were not unlike the mixture Rossellini put in place in Rome Open City. Amarcord had an *ad hoc* feel to its construction reflecting how both Rossellini and Fellini worked from "rudimentary stories" which developed as they were shot (Williams, 1980. p.103).

The provincial school in Amarcord, where pedantic and incompetent tutors taught a range of subjects that were useless in Fellini's opinion, such as the prospect of a glorious military future as opposed to the real and bankrupt recent history, a notion of high art that did not have much relevance to their everyday life, and a level of religious indoctrination that was part of a levelling process that defied individual thought. The only escape for Titta and his contemporaries was in a time wasting truancy. The nature of the school system contributed to this lack of maturity, as did the repression experienced under Fascism, but ultimately Fellini blamed the Catholic Church for imposing unacceptable levels of sexual repression and frustration. The portraits of the Pope, Mussolini, and the King hung on the classroom wall as icons, but the actual taking of photographs for this purpose was called into question and made to look ridiculous.

In Amarcord the anniversary of the Founding of Rome was celebrated on April 21st by a visit from the Federale who represented Mussolini's regime. The fascist posturing of the Federale, his retinue and the town's officials, all in uniform looked ridiculous when they posed comically on a flight of stairs at the end of the parade. Yet a photograph of such an image could be tied into a selective history and used to give weight to what the fascists represented. The Federale's arrival produced hysterical responses. Gradisca was overcome with fanaticism at the sight of the Federale, and she wanted to touch this symbol of Fascist power.







Fig. 3 Amarcord (1973)





Fellini used a dream sequence to illustrate Fascism as a youth cult in the wedding of Ciccio and Aldina, and in another equally outrageous sequence the professor of maths, in uniform, claimed to feel rejuvenated by her participation in the parade, declaring that she felt "young ...because fascism has rejuvenated (her) blood with luminous ideals.....but ancient, because never before as now do we feel we are the children of Rome!" Lallo, in Fascist uniform and bursting with enthusiasm declares what he considers to be most relevant, "Mussolini has two balls this large" (Bondanella. 1992. p.271). Here Fellini made the link between a misdirected sexuality based on an arrested state of psychological development, and the pervasive fascism in the town was again drawn to our attention.

Smoke recurs throughout the film as a metaphor for the clouded vision of the time. The Federale arrived in a cloud of smoke or dust (fig.3 p.20), and the grandfather became disorientated in heavy fog outside his home and he felt so isolated that he thought he might be dead. Later Titta relived or imagined following Gradisca into the otherwise deserted Cinema Fulgor in a flashback during confession. She was glamorised by a halo of smoke lit by the light from the film projector behind her. Gradisca was enthralled by Gary Cooper in Beau Geste (1939), living out her fantasies with him. Titta, seeing Gradisca in a haze of her own cigarette smoke, changed his seat several times (App.1 fig. 3 p.49) until finally he puts his hand on her leg. He was infatuated by her, seeing her as his real live movie star, his object of mediated desire, while the cinema itself was for him the place where normal sexual inhibitions were overcome. Her nonchalant rebuttal was humiliating for him.

As a result of the impact of Hollywood cinema on both Titta and Gradisca, they could only relate to the opposite sex through a form of mediated sexuality that originated in the cinema. "Fellini deconstructed and demystified the complicated cultural operation of mimetic desire that mediated passion by means of external models from the movies" (Bondanella, 1992. p.274) and at the same time examined how American cinematic culture had such an effect on his compatriots. Titta and his friends form a large part of the film which gave Fellini a great opportunity to demonstrate in the adolescent population of Amacord the traits he felt remained with them throughout their lifetimes.

Fellini used narrators throughout the film and their obvious unreliability served to question the authenticity of the film's account of Italian history. He used them to distance the audience, forcing the audience to recognise that it was not reality they were looking at but a fiction, and the extent to which the narrators were used raised the



process of narration itself to the level of subject matter. In the opening sequence the village idiot, Giudizio, spoke awkwardly in the local dialect. He directly addressed the camera accentuating the artificial nature of his position. Later, on his way with the whole town to watch the Rex, Giudizio asked the camera where they are going, further undermining his authority. The reliability of the narrators was totally undermined by the street seller called Bescein, who, claiming to have had a great sexual adventure with each of thirty one women in a visiting Arab sheik's harem has the number reduced by the local lawyer, another narrator, who said it was only twenty eight!

The town's lawyer seemed to be the most complicated narrator as he set himself up as the local historian and 'maker' of culture (App.1 Fig.4 p.50). He accepted everything as it was from the ladies in the brothel to the sexual fantasies of the townspeople. He wrapped it all up in a cloak of respectability of high culture. His interests ranged from the literary prowess of past poets, and Amarcord's proud place in their works, to the Romanesque architecture of the town. The only low cultural element he considered historically valuable was the two thousand year old graffiti on the walls of the Count's cellar. He was the butt of seemingly off-the-cuff abuse while he directly addressed the camera to comment on the unusual fall of snow and how it compared to previous historic falls. As he talked he was hit by a snowball. The lawyer's high art seemed meaningless to the ordinary people who ignored him.

Fellini does not restrict himself to Rossellini's early neorealism. He only sees hope when individuals are free to develop and be accountable for themselves without imposed restrictions, and he strives for a completely free cinematic style. He constantly drew attention to the artificial nature of cinematic art, making the viewer distance himself, while insisting that we recognised ourselves in the characters as well. He saw the cinema itself as a place to overcome sexual inhibitions, which he saw as one of the root causes of the arrested state of development his characters share. He explored the reality of history through a complex fiction using dream sequences, hyperbole, or indeed by any means he intuitively felt contributed to his meaning.





## **CHAPTER TWO**

**BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI**

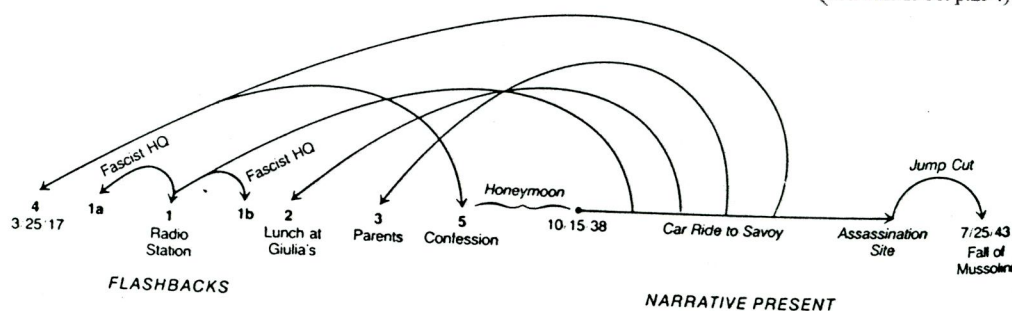




In Fellini's Amarcord the ideological signposts were not so clearly marked as they were in The Conformist (1970) in which Bernardo Bertolucci chose to expand and analyse a similar character to Rossellini's despicable police commissioner in Rome Open City. The viewers would hardly have noticed this minor character, who Rossellini had no interest in foregrounding. Rossellini's aspiration was to contribute to a society where Christian and Marxist elements could unite to build a new united Italy and his emphasis was on united resistance. Rome Open City was made just after the war when fascism was a recent memory. Twenty five years later Bertolucci was looking back at the history of the fascist years of the 30's. He wanted to relive the horrors of history to understand how his country was implicated in the Fascist atrocities of the war and to reduce the chances of it ever happening again. He considered his film to be about the human condition.

In The Conformist Bertolucci examined the personality of one particular fascist, and the psychological and emotional way of being a fascist. Unlike Rossellini's disreputable Police Commissioner Clerici was an educated middle class Doctor of Philosophy. The film was a study of the complex layers of Clerici's psychological make up, in which Bertolucci uncovers the darker side of human nature. In the opening scene Clerici received a phone call while on honeymoon in Paris. The link with its hotel lights and 1930's Hollywood is evident. Bertolucci's used our remembered cinematic notions of the 1930's to place us in the social mores and political ideology of Italy in the 30s. The narrative was opened in bits and pieces through disorientating sequences and it was only at the end of the film that they could be pieced together. Clerici was called from his hotel bedroom to a car ride taking him to Savoy, which was to be taken as the narrative present from which flashbacks, and flashbacks within flashbacks occurred. They established "Clerici's subjectivity as the source of the camera's perspective" (Marcus, 1986 p.295), and they revealed Clerici's to have chaotic and unclear memories or hallucinations. The narrative present ended at the assassination site and then jump cut to the fall of Mussolini on July 25th, 1943.

(Marcus. 1986. p.294)



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The flashbacks were linked to Clerici and sleep, and through that to Freud's theories about dreams that operated by "condensation, displacement, projection and doubling up" (Bondanella. 1993. p.301). The flashbacks were compiled like the movements of his mind as it tripped from place to place through the layers of his memory, while they reflect a completely subjective point of view not at all like documentary reportage.

Rome Open City and The Conformist differed radically in style yet they shared the same moral purpose. The "reality" they both aspired to create sprang from the wish to make people more politically aware and personally responsible. Rossellini used a coherent story line and documentary realism with melodramatic moments, while the omniscient voice-over carried the narrative from one sequence to the next. Bertolucci's narrative was subjective, but was spoken in the third person, and the narrator was completely unreliable. The quickly shifting camera angles and positions, as in the sequence in front of his mother's house at her gate, forefronted the self-conscious narration, while the perspective of Bertolucci's camera in the flashbacks that structured so much of the film seemed as one with the to-ing and fro-ing of Clerici's mind.

Bertolucci's first film The Grim Reaper (1962), which seemed to pay homage to Rossellini's work, (Kolker, 1985. p.20) was an imitation 'neo-realist' film with an uncertain ending made from an idea given to him by Pasolini (Buss, 1989. p.64.). Bertolucci was careful about the distance between the camera and its subjects, and the maintenance of open space that he admired in Rossellini's work and the neorealists in general (Kolker, 1985 p.20). Pasolini was a friend of Bertolucci's father who was a middle class poet. Bertolucci sought to learn about cinema first with Pasolini and then with directors of other nationalities especially Jean Luc Godard having abandoned an early success in poetry (Kolker, 1985. p.14).

Bertolucci had worked with Jean Luc Godard in Paris where he would have become familiar with Godard's didactic political art films, and art cinema practices. Godard insisted that the spectator remained distant and outside the occurring events. (Kolker, 1985. p.86). Bertolucci used back drops, such as in the honeymoon train sequence, to distance us from the narrative and the characters point of view reflecting Godard and Brechtian theory. It was a luxurious film making full use of the 1930's art and decor and unlike Godard, Bertolucci involved us emotionally. The Conformist was financed by Paramount, and it was the first film where Bertolucci broke with Godard in favour of a





commercially driven cinema. The influence of Sternberg, Ophuls and Welles was seen in the re-creation of Fascist Italy (Kolker, 1985. p.23).

"An important element of visual style" (Kolker, 1985. p.64) was contained in Bertolucci's references to surrealism which create a *mise en scene* that undermined the reality of what was or was not there, whether we are seeing a dream or a memory. Magritte was a critic of realism and an illusionist, and the film took on his concerns by such direct references. Thus Bertolucci insisted we recognise that the film and the paintings were mere conventions. He blended a Magritte painting into the film of the exterior of the brothel at Ventimiglia as Clerici approached it "doubling" Magritte and creating "a dialectic of artifice" (Kolker, 1985. p.66). Bertolucci admitted that his own art was an illusion.

In the brothel at Ventimiglia Bertolucci used the Surrealist overlay of the hallucinatory setting to define character. When Raoul altered Clerici's orders and tells him to eliminate Professor Quadri, Clerici is relieved that he had a clear order for which he considered he had no responsibility "regardless of the moral content" (Marcus, 1986. p.293). His reply seemed coherent enough but his exaggerated acting style combined with the *mise en scene* suggested moral disorder.

The asylum that Clerici's biological father was in was like a De Chirico jail. His father's inner turmoil was linked to his recounting of his participation in fascist atrocities. Clerici's father rejected him (fig. 4 P.27) and asked to be strapped into a straight jacket as he mumbles "Massacre and melancholy" over and over again. Clerici's childish behaviour outside his mother's house suggested that he never grew up properly and he did not seem to have passed beyond the Oedipus phase of wanting to hurt his father. Clerici goaded him to renewed insanity.

The Conformist explored Clerici's obsession with abandonment, his search for a surrogate father, and his consequent oedipal relationship with them. His need to please figures in authority and destroy them formed a recurrent theme throughout the film, particularly in the relationship between Clerici and Professor Quadri. This relationship, and the film's central issue of perception and of how Clerici saw himself in the world were concentrated in one scene where Professor Quadri and Clerici discussed his unfinished thesis on Plato's Allegory of the Cave from the Republic.







Fig. 4. The Conformist (1971)





Plato's Allegory of the Cave was acted out in Quadri's office, an acting out of Clerici's unconscious struggle to apply the lesson of Plato's cave to himself. His embracing of fascist ideology was just a means to pander to his personal weaknesses, but he could not see this. The interplay of shadow and silhouette in this sequence was used to highlight the moral questions that arose in this central metaphor and continued throughout the film holding it together (Kolker, 1985. p.96). The light and dark imagery warn us of the consequences of Clerici opting for the darkness of fascist conformity instead of enlightened resistance. Clerici commented on how much the 1930's Italians resemble the prisoners who only see the shadows on the wall and mistake it for reality (App.1 fig 5 p. 51), and a man who spoke as Clerici did could not be a Fascist (Kolker, 1985. p.100). He acted out the lesson by raising his arm in a fascist salute and by turning his back to the window he then looked at his own shadow on the wall. Marcello Clerici was trapped in the darkness for most of the sequence. Professor Quadri opened the window at the end of the scene and Clerici's shadow disappeared suggesting that the prisoner could escape.

This offer of escape and redemption remained until Clerici's decision was made to proceed with the assassinations thus confirming that he was merely a fascist tool carrying out their dirty deeds. He did not have to go with Manganiello, an experienced agent, but he went with some notion of saving Anna Quadri when he heard she had accompanied her husband. Manganiello further undermined unquestioning acceptance of orders by explaining how he and others carried out an assassination 'in error' whilst in Africa because of a delay in orders coming through. Despite his doubts, Clerici condoned the assassinations because at that point it would have put himself at risk to do anything to save her. His action reflected the nature of Fascism with its heroic front on a brutal system dependent on, and demanding, unquestioning conformity. Even Manganiello rejected Clerici in the end as a coward.

The myth of the cave was reflected in the statues of an eagle and the bust of a man being carried outside the Fascist Minister's office. These reminded us of Plato's statues that cast shadows on the wall but that were taken to be reality. They represented fascist images that blocked the light, and in the flashback in the radio station Bertolucci's dark backgrounds and chiaroscuro effects served to appropriate the moral teachings of Plato's allegory.



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The shifting possibilities of Quadri's identity in Bertolucci's central metaphor offered many possibilities. As one of Clerici's surrogate fathers Quadri was the perfect father/teacher. Clerici blamed him for abandoning him when he left Italy, and cited him as the cause of his own fascism. As a man of conscience, Quadri would have appeared to be Clerici's opposite. However Quadri left Italy for the comfort of Paris to act out his revolution in "meaningless intellectual debates" (Bondanella, 1993. p.232). In *The Republic*, Socrates argued that enlightenment must be shared, and the inference is that Quadri should have stayed and led his anti-fascist followers. His lifestyle contrasts with that of the jailed anti-fascists at home and sets Quadri firmly in the comfort loving consumerist middle class. In a later scene where Quadri clearly enjoyed his wife's dancing with Clerici's wife Guilia, Quadri the anti-fascist confirmed himself as a member of the same decadent class as Clerici (App.1 fig. 6 p.52)(Bondanella, 1993. p.304).

Gramsci, founder of the Italian Communist Party, was an anti-fascist who chose to stay in Italy. At that time in Italy it was known that he was a hunchback. He was jailed for the last ten years of his life where he wrote his prison notebooks that were later published. He incorporated revolutionary theory into his way of life. The character Quadri had a hunchback and for that reason Bertolucci could have meant Quadri to represent Gramsci. Gramsci felt there was a crucial role for intellectuals in winning a place for the working classes in Italian cultural society as a means to political success. Equally Quadri could represent Bertolucci himself whose leftist politics were compromised by his middle class existence and his enjoyment of celebrity status instead of the life of a revolutionary. Yet in the film Bertolucci gave Quadri the same address as Godard, his own cinematic father/teacher that he had rejected, so Quadri's character could also be Godard.

Bertolucci was obsessed with the father in his work. We are introduced to Italo, his ideological father in the first flashback in the radio studio. He was the embodiment of fascist theory, Clerici's mentor and fascist contact. Being blind, Italo was metaphorically unable to see reality as he wandered in the dark. The discourse of blindness and control was central to *The Conformist*, and sight was linked to moral and political choices. Clerici sought to appease and be comforted by Italo Montanari, yet at the end of the film in a complete about face Clerici denounced Italo in the changed political climate and deserted him in a hostile crowd.



Another father-son link was with Manganiello, the fascist agent sent to mind Clerici. He was a source of humour in the film apparently talking to birds in a Parisian park. His name and role reflected ancestry in the popular culture of Comedia del Arte (which would have pleased Gramsci). The name Manganello meaning a club, and Pulcinella, the equivalent of our churlish Punch, combined to qualify this graceless fascist bully. The film referent of a Laurel and Hardy photo on the dance-hall window reflected the bullying Manganiello versus the squirming Clerici that occurs when Manganiello demands Clerici advance their assassination plans.

Inside the Fascist ministry where Clerici met yet another surrogate father, the bars suggested by the horizontal and vertical lines of the window reinforced the sense of entrapment. The metaphor of entrapment was seen throughout the film in the gate bars outside his mother (Fig.5. P.31) and in the studio where the whistling fat man on the left of the frame trapped against a white background of the studio left the feeling of a bird in a cage. The vertical trees at the assassination site are like bars (App.1 fig.7 p.53), and in the final sequence of the film Clerici was still trapped behind bars, in a niche like Plato's cave except that the fire was at his side - neither in front nor behind him. The ambiguous ending was brought about by the fire going out - when the projected shadows were no longer on your cinema screen.

The shadows cast by the venetian blinds falling over both Clerici and Giulia combined with the zebra stripes of Giulia's dress described the entrapment and conformity within a bourgeois marriage when Clerici went to Giulia's for lunch. Giulia fitted Clerici's perceptions and needs perfectly - he described her as all "bed and kitchen", the perfect bourgeois partner in a bourgeois marriage that afforded the illusion of normality and strength. To calm Giulia Clerici went to confession before their wedding even though he did not believe in it. The priest did not question the moral aspect of Clerici's confessed sins. His interest was in maintaining the status quo and Bertolucci inferred criticism of the church's political position in fascist Italy where the combination of church repression and state oppression fed off one another.

Bertolucci used dance as a perfect metaphor for social conformity and it recurred again and again as in the Radio station where a singing and identically dressed threesome dance in unison. Although Clerici sought to conform his difference stood out. His fear of difference is linked to his need to conform to the Fascist State for protection (Marcus, 1986. p.307). He was the one singled out in the school grounds for attack by the school







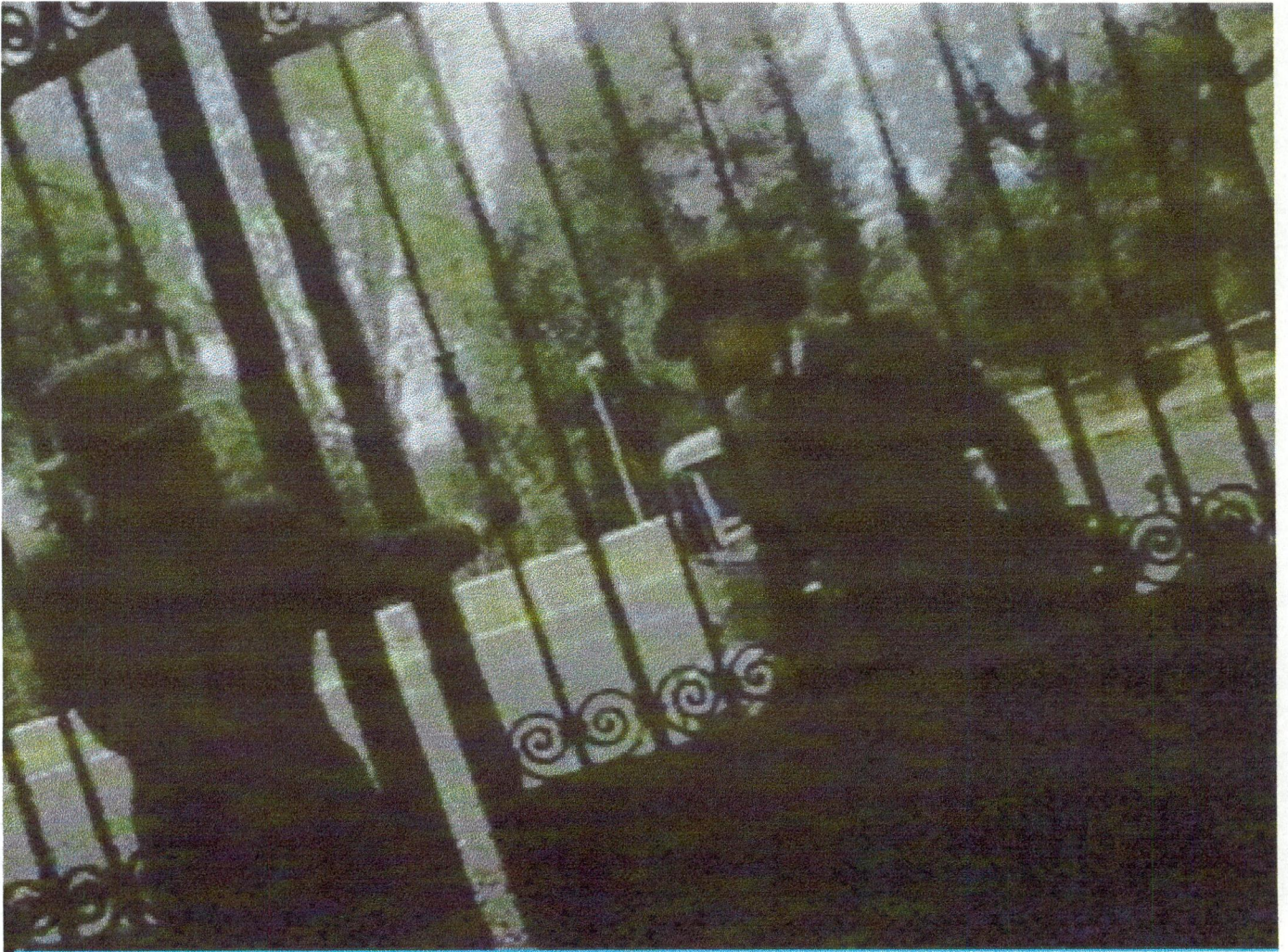


Fig. 5. The Conformist. (1970)



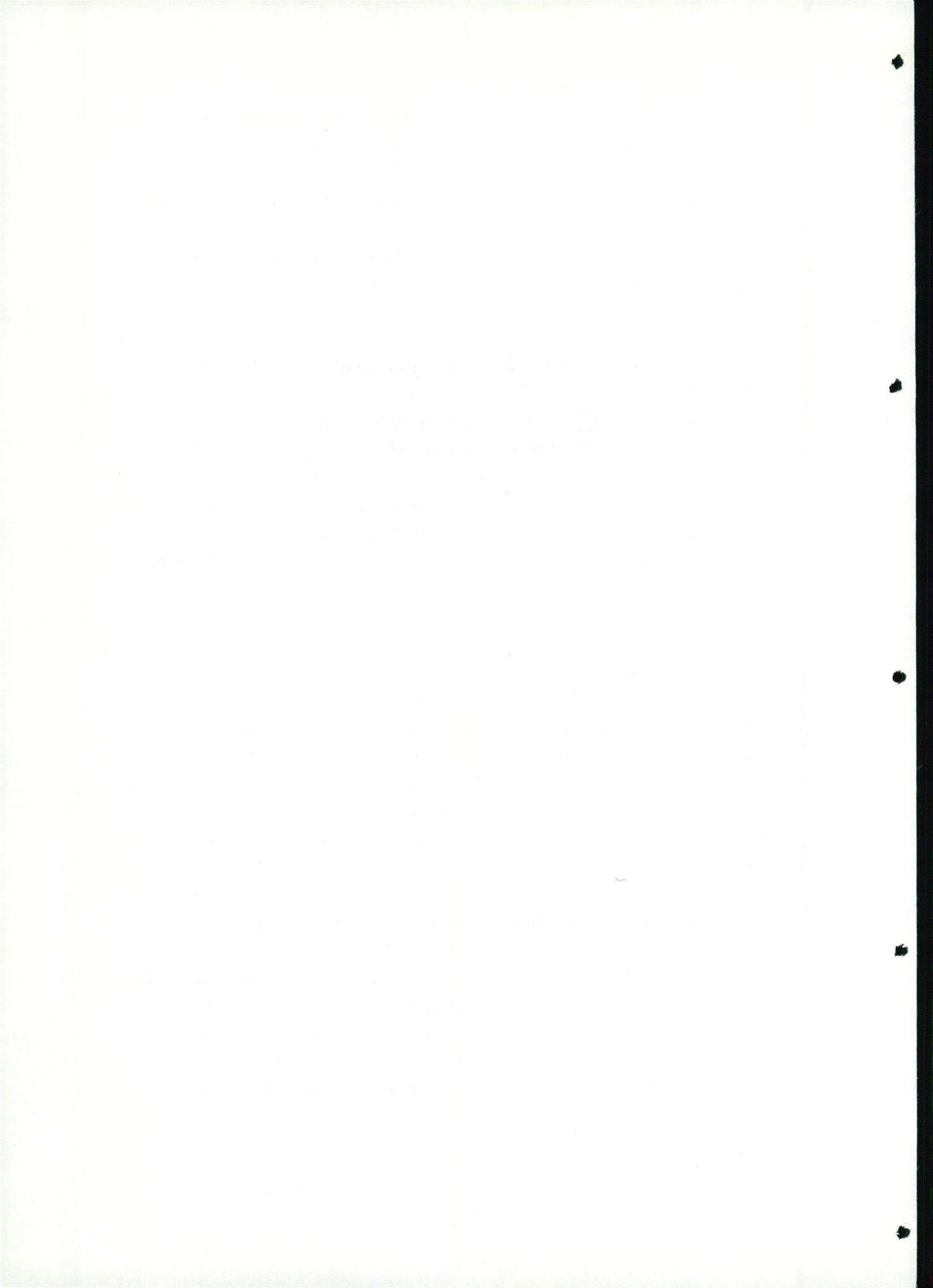


bullies, and he didn't want to lead the *Farendol* on the eve of the assassination. At one moment he was dancing, and the next moment he was alone on the dance floor yet trapped by a whirl of dancers with his hands in the air different and trapped. Later Clerici and Manganiello preferred not to dance and they exchanged the information that led to the assassination while the dance went on without them. Anna Quadri taught ballet which confirmed her bourgeois status, and her bourgeois decadence is confirmed when she danced seductively with Giulia on the eve of the assassination.

The minister's mistress was the first of the three characters played by Dominique Sanda the other two were an unnamed prostitute in a brothel run as a front for Fascist Secret Police HQ in Ventimiglia, and Anna, the bi-sexual wife of Professor Quadri. She was the only one who really had Clerici's measure, seeming more in touch with reality than he was. Quadri's intellectual debate in his office with Clerici was meaningless for their two wives who were getting great pleasure out of playing with a mimeograph machine. Anna recognised Clerici was there to kill her husband and herself. In her role, as the seemingly self-assured bisexual seducer, she seemed to be desperately attempting to dissuade Clerici, allowing his advances, to bargain for her husband's life, and also she wished to access his wife Giulia

When Clerici visits the ministerial room he appeared to see Dominique Sanda yield to the Minister's embraces while he sat at his desk. That was just so unlikely, and although the editing initially hid the enormity of the ministerial office, Clerici could not have recognised her at such a distance, so the close up of her face was marked as subjective. Clerici's memory was such that it could only be a subjective image of pure fantasy. It seemed that Clerici saw all women as Anna, with the exception of his wife Giulia, not because she was a whore and Giulia was not, but because she was bi-sexual like he himself was. As the film's perspective and Clerici's were the same Anna may have been something in his mind.

By incorporating Freudian and Marxist theory in his work Bertolucci tried to establish a relationship between the psychological and the political. Clerici repeatedly expressed the need to feel normal. Bertolucci suggested his fascism was rooted in a psychological need and not in any ideological belief, to compensate him for his feeling of deviancy which Bertolucci sourced in a traumatic sexual attack on him when he was 13 years of age. If Clerici's desire to be normal sprang from his unconscious, then Clerici was searching for an outside force to take control of him and impose order from without, to do his thinking



for him and to be accountable for his actions in order to rid himself of his own sense of deviancy. On the other hand Clerici became a fascist because he chose to be one, because it was the prevailing ideology. If he was just acting in his own self interest as a consequence of a carefully interpreted memory, it meant that what we were actually seeing were Clerici's memories. That would mean that Clerici was capable of total betrayal of himself and everyone else, and that he was both a cowardly killer and a liar craving the acceptance of his peers. This psychological mechanism of deception/self-deception, a theme explored throughout the film, would better explain how fascism was sustained.

Bertolucci used recurrent metaphors, themes and cinematic styles to uncover Clerici's psychological reason for wanting to conform. The story line was only explained in bits and pieces and the viewer could only piece the film together at the end. Entrapment suggested by bars, horizontal or vertical, and Clerici's need to please figures in authority and his search for surrogate fathers were continuing themes throughout The Conformist. But it was Plato's myth that is the central metaphor of the film where light and shadow are linked to moral choices. In a black-out at the end of the film, Mussolini's broken statue was dragged by chains through the streets of Rome. The prisoners could have escaped.

Clerici considered that his murder of his homosexual seducer made him a social outcast and that he could make up to society for his misdeed by murdering the anti-fascist Quadri. In the confessional sequence his linking of the two revealed a totally jumbled logic. However at the end of the film Clerici discovered that Lino, his attacker and murder victim was alive, and the reason for murdering the Quadris no longer existed. He immediately tried to transfer his accountability onto his blind fascist friend Italo to protect himself and still remain within the status quo. His reasoning was extremely disordered but revealed his ruthlessness.

In a final reference to the myth of Plato's cave the fire at the end of the film was a metaphor for cinema casting illusions/shadows on the screen. They no longer appeared when the fire - the light of the projector was put out. Bertolucci left the viewers with a feeling of great anxiety. This is a cautionary tale as it reveals how society and its' criminals were not very different from each other.





## **CHAPTER THREE**

**PAOLO AND VITTORIO TAVIANI  
THE TAVIANI BROTHERS**



The Night of San Lorenzo (1981) was a remake of the documentary film San Miniato, July '44 which Paolo and Vittorio Taviani made in 1954 with the assistance of Cesare Zavattini, "one of the foremost spokesmen of the Italian neorealist school of c.1940 to c.1955". (Williams, 1993. p.29). Like all their earlier work San Miniato, July '44 was in the neorealist style, but twenty seven years later The Night of San Lorenzo was more complex in its thematic concerns, its form and in cinematic style.

The Taviani grew up in San Miniato where in July 1944 the Germans and their Fascist allies massacred the townspeople in retaliation for the death of a German soldier killed by a partisan. The town San Martino in San Lorenzo was in fact the town of San Miniato and the massacre of the townspeople in their Tuscan birthplace was the origin of the story of The Night of San Lorenzo (Bondanella, 1993. p.392). A number of the townspeople were tricked into the mined Cathedral and either killed or maimed while the remainder fled and became directly involved in a bitter civil war. As young teenagers the Taviani brothers had seen Paisa when playing truant from school and were so overwhelmed by it that they had decided to become film directors (Marcus, 1986. p.360). Rossellini was the first major influence on the Taviani Brothers.

"Our relationship with neorealism is a love-hate relationship, like that of a father to a son. Born from a father we loved and admired, we have come to deny with all the ungrateful violence of children who realise themselves in the measure to which they destroy the parent. Our formation and our choice (that is, to make films) are bound to the love for the cinema in general and for neorealism in particular". (Marcus, 1986. pp 361.362)

In Paisa Rossellini showed how the Italian and American cultures gradually came to understand each other better but no mention was made of any differences within the Italian factions. Rossellini did not really include collaboration as part of his subject matter in Paisa and in Rome Open City he minimised it in a selective account of unified Italian Resistance.

The historical subject matter of Paisa was presented differently in The Night of San Lorenzo. The northward progress of the Allies from their landing in Sicily in 1943 up the peninsula in Paisa, and the consequent clash of cultures was in contrast to the confused journey of the Tuscan peasants in the Night of San Lorenzo, "without either destination or clear purpose" (Bondanella, 1993. p.393). The Taviani brothers





highlighted the Italian fascists who collaborated with the Germans during the war and who were part of their own society, with the same cultural roots and dialect. They forefronted the tragedy of the civil war which followed the end of World War 2, when the Italians themselves turned on each other to determine their political future. This raised the question of how history was recorded in film by exposing the inadequacies of earlier neorealist treatments that supposedly told "reality" (Williams, 1993. p.29).

In The Night of San Lorenzo the German presence was almost as illusory as the American one. Besides the Sicilian episode there was only one other encounter with the Germans showing a young German accompanying his fallen comrades as they were drawn along in a broken down bus by two grey horses. He was singing "the slow haunting aria of Wolfram von Eschenbach's hymn to the evening star in *Tannhauser*" and this stylistic presentation is justified by Cecilia's point of view (Marcus, 1986. p.366). The German presence is a most sympathetic one unlike Rossellini's portrayal in Rome Open City.

The American army had almost no presence in The Night of San Lorenzo except for two imagined encounters and one real encounter between the narrator Cecilia, her friend Renata and two G.I.'s. They gave the girls Hershey bars and blew up condoms in lieu of balloons. In the first pseudo-encounter a gramophone played *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* as a prank that led the townspeople to believe that the victorious American army had arrived, and in another a young Sicilian woman believed she had met a Sicilian American contingent of the Allied forces who she rushed forward to meet. Suddenly while breaking cover she was gunned down by young German soldiers who just shot something that moved, but so convinced was she of their identity that her illusion carried on to her last breath, fulfilling her wish but it was not based in reality. This was such a contrast to the Christian brotherhood established by Carmella in the Sicilian episode of Paisa (Bondanella, 1993. p.394) and as such suggested that the Rossellini's ideal was merely another wish fulfilment fantasy (Marcus, 1986. p.371).

The initial landing of American forces in Sicily led to language difficulties and distrust. Carmela, a local girl, offered to show the Allies a way through a mine field. Still fearing her as the Italians were still allied to Germany, they placed a guard on her, Joe from Jersey. In an exchange full of misinterpretation compounded by the language barrier, they managed to come to an understanding which Joe hoped to extend by showing Carmela a photo of his sister. During this exchange Joe's reference to the falling star



linked Rossellini's episode to The Night of San Lorenzo. His lit cigarette attracted a German sniper's bullet. Although Carmela tried to help Joe, his comrades blamed her for his death. The final shot revealed how she herself had been killed.

In The Night of San Lorenzo the Homeric myth was used to uncover the real Italian wartime and post-war experience. By showing the process of legend taking place, and deconstructing it at the same time, the Tavianis were querying the legend that was now in place instead of the true history both of World War 2 and the civil war that followed it.

In a fanciful scene Cecelia saves herself from death during the battle by closing her eyes and reciting the *filastrocca* she was taught by her mother to protect herself. The fascist who threatened her died, pierced by an incredible number of spears thrown by the partisans who were transformed into Greek Hoplites from the legends of Homer (Bondanella, 1993. p.394) (App.1, fig 8. p.54).

The reality of civil war was expressed in the wretched battle in the wheatfields. At one stage both sides went to assist their wounded and passed drinks back and forth without noticing that they were deadly enemies because of their common language (Fig.6 p.38). The element of farce was brilliantly handled and it distanced the viewer just as there was a danger of suspending disbelief and becoming emotionally involved.

Throughout the film the artificial nature of the work was emphasised by introducing farce or some stylish element, such as a long dissolve or a slow lateral wipe highlighting the film's editing or the highly artificial painted back-drop of the framing device at the beginning and end of the film (App.11, fig. 9. p.55). The spectator is made to remain conscious that it is a film not reality, and stays objective emotionally, reflecting the influence of Brecht.

Bertolt Brecht was a theatrical producer who was concerned with moral and political dilemmas. He believed you could contribute to change through cultural interventions and he developed a new style of "epic" theatre and a new theory of theatrical "distanciation" or "alienation". When these strategies of estrangement were applied to film they were dubbed "Brechtian". (Cook, 1993. p.220) He felt "the film told the spectator what he should be thinking" (Williams, 1993. p.163). Brecht was opposed to the suspension of disbelief, and he introduced elements to make the spectator aware of









Fig. 6: The Night of San Lorenzo (1982)





the artifice of the work, to reduce the emotional impact and to keep the spectator critical and distanced.

The artificiality of the mural backdrop as a framing device establishes the anti-neorealist tone of the film, and "announces ...the subjective nature" of the narrator Cecelia (App. 11. fig.9 p.55) (Marcus, 1986, p.362) When she starts to talk you cannot actually see her. Her memories of a "night long ago when each falling star granted you a wish" when she was six years old cannot be reliable, especially as she did not actually witness some of the events she "recalls". The Tavianis undermined her reliability but used her to comment on how history is told and re-invented as a result of misremembering or selective representation in film and in historical records. Cecelia admitted uncertainty in her story telling she called documentary reportage into question and implied that neorealism was not the only way of recounting Italian post-war history. They called the viewers attention to their own hope of being able to capture the reality of the events in their own town so that they might "succeed in finding the words to tell you of another night" (Marcus, 1986. p.363).

The film was told from many subjective perspectives reflecting the diverse true to life view points. They varied from just wanting to be left with a roof over their heads, to love stories, to the basic need to gather in the harvest and on to the telling of the bloody civil war battles. The townspeople seemed to just want to live in peace, and their many points of view were presented from their many perspectives throughout the film. This was an anti-realist approach differing from the single perspectives of the main characters in films such as Germany Year Zero (Rossellini 1947) and La Strada (Fellini 1954).

The local Bishop advised the townspeople to gather in the Cathedral as commanded by the Nazis believing in their promise of safety. In contrast Galvano, the pure popular hero of neorealist films, instinctively mistrusts their promises, and having had his suspicions confirmed by a fascist guard, he flees. The Tavianis make no moral judgement on why they chose either to stay or flee providing no ideological information on the individual characters. In contrast to the Bishop in the Cathedral who is dependent on the moral power of institutions, the celebrant at Corrado's and Bellindia's wedding, a country priest, casts institutional guarantees aside and exhorts the congregation to survive. He recognises that their strength was within themselves.

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Galvano Galvani attempted to lead part of the population toward the American liberation front, to save himself as well as the others. Throughout the journey the elderly heroine Concetta's ability to match her real needs to her behaviour was linked to her not allowing the notion of social standing to interfere with her instinctive responses. She is helped by Galvano who clumsily recognises how she feels. She loses all the symbols of her social standing on the forced walk discarding the status symbols that distanced her from her peasant origins, significantly removing her veil passing the farmhouse, La Meridiana, where she was born.

In the Taviani's film they dramatised not only that the civil war took place but how it affected families. During the battle in the wheatfield Mara, a character from the town and Nicola's sister, met her other brother in a fascist black shirt, but she was able to kick him away so that he could be shot. Her contradictory behaviour reflected the confusion of her psychic state throughout the film (Marcus, 1986. p.378). Earlier she had been glad that her family would have to move to the city when her house was mined. Later reflecting on a happy childhood she was sorry it was gone. When discussing a possible love affair with Cecilia's mother she left the future up to 'when the German reconnaissance plane flies over again'. Such superstitious abdication of responsibility introduces the notion of how fickle her ideological position was, and that she might even consider the truck on which she left the scene of the battle as an indicator of how she should choose. The spectator was left not knowing whether she drove off as a captive or whether she had changed sides.

The motif of washing away the past was repeated throughout the film. Concetta and Galvano group bathed in the Arno on the journey Concetta took back to her roots, and at the end of the film they were both washed again, with the whole group in the rain - while the sun shone through the rainstorm. Galvano's love affair with Concetta introduced the hope of rebirth against all the odds in what is essentially an optimistic story. The young babies at the end of the film were further symbols of rebirth and hope - the child in the hostess's arms, but also Cecilia's young daughter who will no doubt pass on her mother's bedtime stories to her children.



## **Conclusion.**





Having focussed on The Conformist (1970) by Bernardo Bertolucci, Amarcord (1973) by Federico Fellini and The Night of the Shooting Stars (1982), by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani it is now clear how these later films dealing with Fascism and war acknowledge their lasting debt to neorealism. Each film has dealt in its' own different way with the phenomenon of collaboration, and the need to acknowledge the reality of history. They have recognised that not all Italian enemies were unintelligible foreigners, and that some of their worst enemies were their own citizens seeking political power or acceptance.

It is evident that Fellini, Bertolucci and the Taviani Brothers, like Rossellini, chose to address this period of Italian history, but after such a time span they were looking back from the perspective of history. Rossellini in Rome Open City had been extremely selective in presenting the unity of Resistance against a common German enemy, and had overlooked the phenomenon of Italian collaboration with the Germans, and the previous 20 years of Fascist rule. In Paisa Rossellini followed the passage of the American Forces up through the Italian Peninsular, examining the ensuing cultural clash which he saw leading to understanding. It is now apparent that Fellini, Bertolucci and the Taviani Brothers sought to review Rossellini's simplified accounts, by more complex examination of the social and political issues, and that they chose to develop their cinematic language further than the "limitations" of neorealism.

It has been shown how Fellini questioned the group acceptance of the ideologies in place and the disastrous effects of repression that were generated by the State and Church working together. He considered that an "eternal adolescence" permeated the town of Amarcord, and that its' people lived out their lives in escapist fantasies modelled on their images of Hollywood. Fellini made use of many obviously unreliable narrators.

It was seen how Bertolucci presented the narrative in fractured time from Clerici's subjective point of view, and that the viewer was continually forced to evaluate earlier information and to reassess whether a flashback was a memory or something imagined. It is evident that all of these directors encouraged the spectator to distance themselves from their films and to question how they were made. Bertolucci attempted to unearth the causes of Fascism and the authoritarian personality within one particular fascist collaborator. All three films reject the notion that Nazis and Fascists were other than normal.



The Taviani Brothers drew attention to the role ordinary Italians played in World War 2, both the fascists and the anti-fascists. They showed how history was mis-remembered, and they exposed the clash within the Italian culture itself rather than the consequences of the American or German presence. The three films reflect the fear that fascism lurks within each one of us, and that we would do well to learn the lessons of history.

Looking back it is clear that The Conformist (1970), Amarcord (1973), and The Night of San Lorenzo (1982) were generated by similar moral imperatives to both Rome Open City (1945) and Paisa (1947) and that they are indebted to Rossellini for their choice of subject matter, and his lead in searching for a style that would depict reality.





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## APPENDIX I.

## FILMOGRAPHY.

### MA CITTA APERTA / ROME OPEN CITY (1945)

*d* Roberto Rossellini *sc* Sergio Amidei, Federico Fellini *ph* Ubaldo Arata *mus* Renzo Rossellini *pc* Excelsa Films with Marcello Pagliero, Aldo Fabrizi, Harry Feist, F. Grand-Jacquet, Anna Magnani.

### PAISA/ PAISAN (1946)

*d* Roberto Rossellini *sc* Sergio Amidei, Klaus Mann, Federico Fellini, Rosellini *ph* Otello Martelli *mus* Renzo Rossellini *pc* La Cineteca Nazionale, MGM with Carmela Sazio, Dots Johnson, Maria Michi, Gar Moore, Renzo Avanzo.

### IL CONFORMISTA / THE CONFORMIST (1971)

*d* Bernardo Bertolucci *sc* Bertolucci *from* the novel by Alberto Moravia *ph* Vittorio Storaro *m* Georges Delerue *pc* Mars/Marianne/ Maran-Film with Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, Dominique Sanda, Enzo Tarascio.

### AMARCORD. (1973)

*d* Federico Fellini *sc* Fellini, Antonio Guerra *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno *sd* Danilo Donati *m* Nino Rota *pc* Franco Cristaldi with Bruno Zanin, Pupella Maggio, Armanda Brancia, Magali Noel.

### LA NOTTE DI SAN LORENZO / THE NIGHT OF SAN LORENZO (1982)

*d* Paola and Vittorio Taviani *sc* Paola Taviani, Vittorio Taviani, Giuliani *sc* collaborator Tonino Guerra. *ph* Franco Di Giacomo. *col* Agfa *sd.rec* Fausto Ancillai, *sd engineer* Hubrecht Nijhuis *p. assistant* Grazia Voldi *l.p.* Omero Antonutti, Margarita Lozano. 107 mins.





## APPENDIX II

### Film Stills

Fig. 1	<u>Rome Open City</u> (1945)	Page 47
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Fig. 3	<u>Amarcord</u> (1973)	Page 49
Fig. 4	<u>Amarcord</u> (1973)	Page 50
Fig. 5	<u>The Conformist</u> (1970)	Page 51
Fig. 6	<u>The Conformist</u> (1970)	Page 52
Fig. 7	<u>The Conformist</u> (1970)	Page 53
Fig. 8	<u>The Night of San Lorenzo</u> (1982)	Page 54
Fig. 9	<u>The Night of San Lorenzo</u> (1982)	Page 55





Fig. 1      Rome Open City (1945)







Fig. 2      Amarcord (1973)







Fig. 3      Amarcord (1973)







Fig. 4      Amarcord (1973)







Fig. 5      The Conformist (1970).







Fig. 6      The Conformist (1970).







Fig. 7      The Conformist (1970).







Fig. 8 The Night of San Lorenzo (1982).





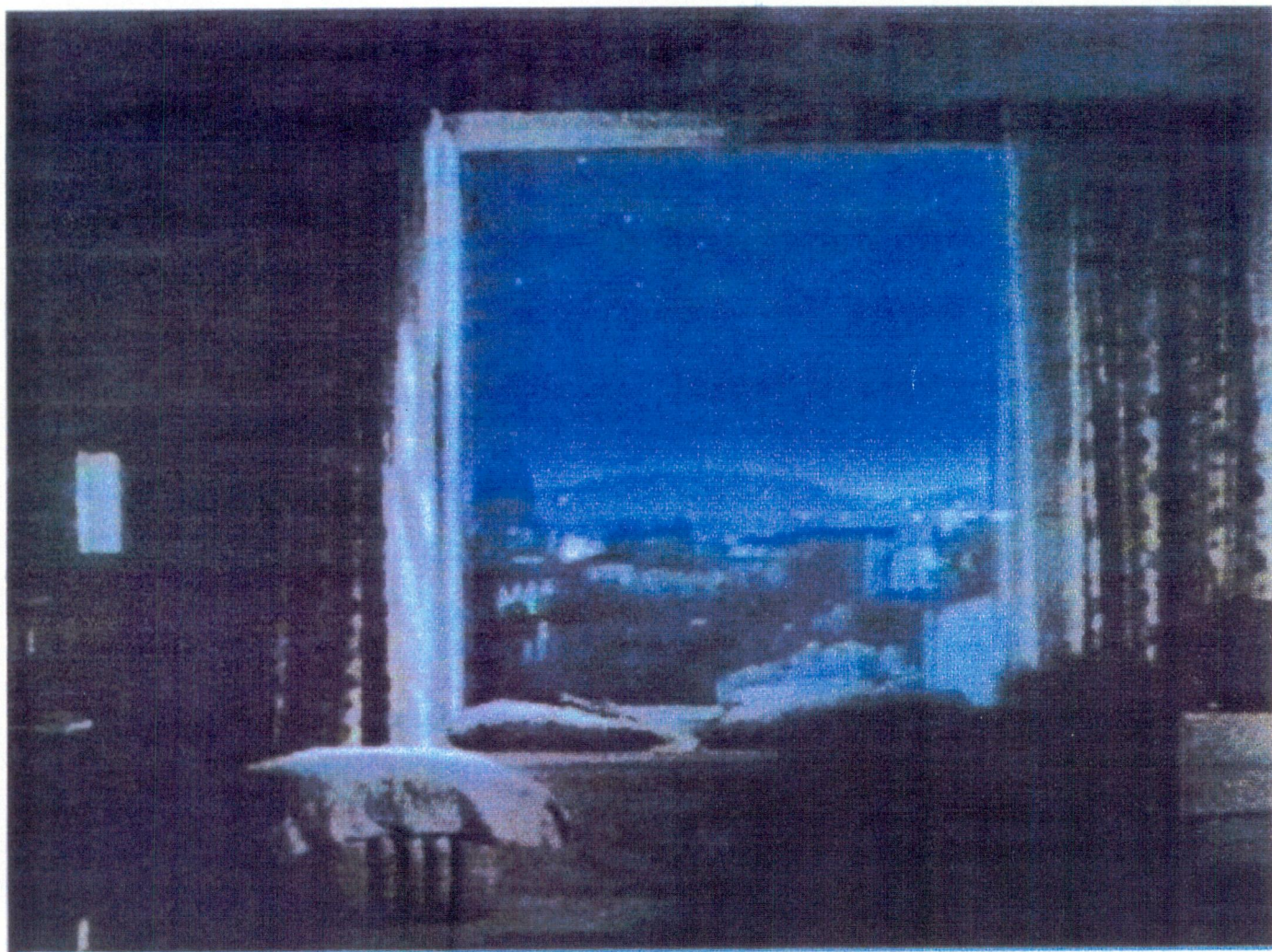


Fig. 9 The Night of San Lorenzo (1982)

