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# Time, History, and Fascism in Bertolucci's Films

~ FRANCES FLANAGAN ~

The aim of the historian is to portray time. The historian is committed to the detection and description of the shape of time.<sup>1</sup>

*George Kubler*

I wanted to tell a story in the present perfect tense, so that I could look at the present pretending to be already talking about the past.<sup>2</sup>

*Bernardo Bertolucci*

For filmmakers, the epistemological problematics inherent in the Rankean assumption that history should 'show things as they really were' are particularly acute. The fact that, unlike conventional academic writing, historical films are primarily commercial products that must generate a profit as well as a coherent understanding of the past sits uncomfortably with the idea of history as committed to the disinterested pursuit of the truth. Makers of films about the past are necessarily self-conscious about the present-centred nature of their description of 'the shape of time'. If film time is reliable, simple, and linear, if film space is fixed, constant, and measurable, it is because the filmmaker has consciously decided to represent it in that fashion. The unique potential of film to conceptualise time and space in radically different ways from the written text makes historical film a very useful source for historians to understand the period in which they are made. Arguably, films have been the chief carriers of historical messages in society since the second world war. Films that present a version of the past legitimise, shape, and, to an extent, homogenise their audiences' 'collective memory' of that past. Representing the past on film is, therefore, a highly political act since, as Michel Foucault has noted, 'if one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism'.<sup>3</sup> In such a context, the screen itself becomes 'the cerebral membrane where immediate and direct confrontations take place between the past and the future'.<sup>4</sup>

Bertolucci's films of 1970, *The Spider's Stratagem* and *The Conformist*, are particularly indicative of these processes. Both films are about time: they meditate on the history and static memory of Fascism in an Italian Republic that had, as one commentator observed, 'lived through several centuries' since the war.<sup>5</sup> At the time of their making, a generation of Italian historians and filmmakers had been preserving the comforting myths of antifascism, which had been fabricated as an escape from the trauma of the nation's war experience for over two decades. In *Stratagem*, Bertolucci illustrates the relationship between the maintenance of such myths and the manipulating of time.<sup>6</sup> *The Conformist*, a film



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Bertolucci describes as 'a memory of my own memory',<sup>7</sup> is similarly preoccupied with representing (and, to some extent, destabilising) neorealist images from the postwar cult of the resistance. Both films are highly conscious of the complex nature of historian's time and indicate that the endeavour to represent a version of the past 'manufactures another past for itself'.<sup>8</sup> Just as republican Italy manipulated time in its memory of the war experience, so filmmakers manipulate time in their endeavour to represent the past. *Stratagem* and *The Conformist* are films fascinated by the *production* of myths, and thus evoke metahistorical questions about the purposes and use of history.

The inhabitants of the town of Tara in *The Spider's Stratagem* exist in a hallucinatory state 'outside time' as a consequence of their singular interpretation of the past. Athos Magnani (Giulio Brogi), son of an antifascist hero who was killed thirty years before, returns to his hometown at the request of his dead father's 'official mistress', Draifa (Alida Valli). While engaging in a 'quest for the past', the young Athos Magnani becomes entangled in Tara's memory of antifascism. The myths are crafted like threads of a spider's web—translucent, yet dangerous and paralysing.<sup>9</sup> The town's equation of resistance with heroism is monolithic, in a literal sense, since it is studded with monuments in memory of Athos Magnani Sr., a 'hero vilely assassinated by the Fascists, June 15, 1936'. Significantly, the eyes have been painted out on the father's statue, so as to suggest the blindness to history inherent in such myths.<sup>10</sup>

As a 'hero' of the resistance, the father is portrayed as a master of time: he can make daylight come early by crowing at the cocks, or freeze time with his promise to make Tara into a theatre for the performance of his own heroic murder, 'so that people will continue to hate fascism'. Bertolucci cleverly reverses the conventional interpretation: rather than Fascism, it is the discourses of resistance that are equated with operatic spectacle. Mussolini's assassination, as plotted by Athos Sr. and three antifascist comrades in 1936, was to occur during a performance of *Rigoletto*, at the moment when Rigoletto sings 'Ah, la maledizione!' ('Ah, the curse!'). Athos discovers that his father was the traitor to the plan, yet he cannot reveal the treachery to the citizens of Tara. Rather, he is bound with a 'pattern of repeated lines' and 'circular labyrinths' to an idealised memory of the past.<sup>11</sup> These 'memories' are constantly being rehearsed by the community.<sup>12</sup> For example, we see old men and women sitting on a cart outside the theatre during the performance of *Rigoletto* reciting, like aloof actors, the dramatic events that took place thirty-six years before:

'She was a stranger, this gypsy, from Naples or somewhere. Darkness, she said, and in darkness he died. In the darkness of the theatre they shot him.'

'The motorcyclist was dressed in black'

'Athos put the letter in his pocket, they found it unopened. It read, 'if you enter the theatre, you will die'.

Clearly, these are 'memories' that are as 'staged' as the opera that is being performed inside the theatre.

Athos' attempts to 'get behind' the image of his father are futile, since the camera simply follows him around and around. He cannot desecrate his father's tomb without defacing the date of his own birth as well.<sup>13</sup> The sense of collision between the present and the past culminates in a montage sequence where Athos is running through the woods. Shots of the father's legs are intercut with shots of the son's top half, until the bodies seem fused.

The final image of the railway covered in tall grass and weeds confirms our suspicion that the 'locomotive of history' (a symbol of the distinctively linear 'shape of time' in *Novecento*) has not visited Tara in many years, if ever at all.

Rather, time in Tara is elliptical, surreal, and uncertain. The film's last scene leaves the viewer unsure whether the young Athos actually had any referent at all beyond the memory of his father. Draifa even identifies him from a newspaper photograph,<sup>14</sup> a medium traditionally perceived as having pretensions of telling the truth about things as they 'actually happened'. From the very beginning of *Stratagem*, the historiographical myth of objectivity simultaneously pervades the town and embalms it. The strange absence of the middle generation (all the townspeople are either elderly or children) heightens the sense that Tara is insulated from the flow of time, a living newspaper photograph from 1945.

The stasis of the town is juxtaposed with the vitality of the natural landscape. For example, Draifa's villa is invaded by her garden, the countryside seems 'ready to pounce',<sup>15</sup> and a lion even escapes from the German circus onto the streets. The fact that the lion dies (symbolising the end of the Nazi presence in Italy) and is served for dinner triumphantly decorated with an elaborate fruit garnish is another subtle illustration of the way the myth of antifascism was dressed up and consumed by the town.

Bertolucci has said that he made *Stratagem*, a film financed by R.A.I. (the Italian state television service) 'almost as a revenge . . . filming it *against* television'.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, there is the sense of an active and conscious manipulation of conventions in the film. Bertolucci exploits neorealism as a cinematic source, building the film out of 'precise and detailed observations of character in a landscape',<sup>17</sup> despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that *Stratagem's* complex discursive analysis problematises the very moral simplicity allegedly at the heart of the neorealist project.<sup>18</sup>

*Stratagem* dryly caricatures archetypal neorealist images and themes. The town of Tara is presented as a kind of heroic character in the film, echoing Rome in Rossellini's *Rome: Open City* (1945). In similar mimicry of the most 'real' of neorealist films, Visconti's *La Terra Trema* (1947), nonprofessional actors play the parts of the villagers in *Stratagem*.<sup>19</sup> However, Bertolucci frequently disappoints our expectations of realism by tampering with codes of cinematic representation. For example, during Athos' conversation with Giabazzi, the salami curer, the scene fades out to black and then fades back in, but the dialogue continues from ostensibly the same point. Such a fade appears to be a mistake in film grammar, since fades usually indicate the passage of time, but none appears to have passed. Similarly, there is no attempt at flashback illusionism in the film: Draifa, Rasori, Costa, and Giabazzi in the 'present' look the same way they did in the 'past'; Athos the father and Athos the son appear identical (except for the deliberately literal red scarf worn by the father) because they are represented by the same actor, Giulio Brogi. By 'playing with time' in such a fashion, Bertolucci not only elaborates on the idea that preserving myth necessitates preserving time but also foregrounds his own identity as a strategist. In self-consciously exposing cinematic codes as artifice,<sup>20</sup> Bertolucci enhances the plausibility of his argument by demonstrating his awareness of its necessary partiality: as a filmmaker, he can offer, at most, a story of the myth of the resistance, and not the truth about how it really was.

The Borges story on which *The Spider's Stratagem* is based,<sup>21</sup> *The Theme of the Traitor and Hero*, similarly meditates on its own processes of representation. The narrator admits that 'I have imagined the following argument'.<sup>22</sup> The sheer number of texts referred to

in the construction of the 'text' of resistance also invokes a sense of a poststructuralist 'death of the author' in the film. *Stratagem* is thick with allusions to cinema (*Orpheus*), opera (*Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, *Un ballo in maschera*), painting (Magritte), and literature (*Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*). Even the name of the village where the story is set, Tara, invokes the Hollywood *Gone with the Wind* fantasy of 'passion and history frozen'.<sup>23</sup> Like *The Conformist*, which explicitly references Plato's cave as a theoretical model for the spectator's experience of mistaking the shadows of images for reality, *Stratagem* is a film about filmmaking.

Bertolucci juxtaposes the complex and multifarious nature of cinematic representation with the naive simplicity of Tara's memory of antifascism. Bertolucci's employment of *Rigoletto* in the film is indicative of both of these processes. On one level, *Rigoletto* underpins the narrative of *Stratagem* itself in its themes of betrayal, mistaken identity, class vengeance against tyranny, fathers, and melodrama.<sup>24</sup> However, Verdi is also usually associated with the interpretation of Italian history as continuity, a reading Bertolucci was so crudely to endorse six years later in the film he professed to be 'the story of Italian culture', *Novecento*.<sup>25</sup>

In the context of the postwar historiography of fascism, *Stratagem* offers a sophisticated critique of Croce's characterisation of fascism as an 'intellectual and moral disease' that existed as a 'parenthesis' in Italian history.<sup>26</sup> In Bertolucci's film it is not fascism, but rather the discourses of antifascism that isolate Tara 'outside history'. The strange temporality of the film is clearly evocative of the ways in which intellectuals represented the fascist era in the immediate postwar period: as a time of 'unreality', 'paralysis', and 'intoxication'.<sup>27</sup> 'Mussolini', wrote Alberto Moravia in 1946, 'had frozen Italian life for twenty years under a vacuum-packed glass bell'.<sup>28</sup> Such a description of the 'shape of time' would seem equally apt if directed at the town of Tara. *Stratagem* subtly parodies the postwar characterisation of fascism as 'outside time' and the resistance as a 'return to the real' founded on a 'reaction against rhetoric'.<sup>29</sup> For example, Moravia's defensive assertion in 1946 that he had been an antifascist, as had 'almost all' of his literary peers,<sup>30</sup> is strongly reminiscent of the (rhetorical) maxim constantly repeated in Tara: that 'we are all friends here'.

However, I would argue further that, to an extent, *Stratagem* implicitly recognises the continuities that existed between the political uses of the realist aesthetic by both antifascist and fascist writers, as identified by contemporary critics. Ruth Ben-Ghiat concludes that the realist paradigm was not, as previously assumed, exclusively associated with antifascist political sentiments, but rather evolved in the early 1930s 'as part of an endeavour by Italian intellectuals to create a culture that would reflect the notion of fascism as a revolutionary "third way" after liberalism and Marxism'.<sup>31</sup> While Bertolucci does not address these matters directly in *Stratagem*, his paradoxical representation of fascist symbols in the context of antifascist discourse suggests a similarity between the historiography of Fascists and antifascist intellectuals.<sup>32</sup> For example, when Athos gives his speech to the citizens of Tara affirming his father's heroism, the men are dressed in black and hold black umbrellas, while a young boy, wearing red, wanders through the crowd. The implication is that both fascists and antifascists accepted and endorsed singular and mythical understandings of their past and present. Thus, it would seem that Bertolucci's interrogation of the realist paradigm is integral to his critique of the simplicity of antifascist discourse.

The temporal ambiguity of *Stratagem* invokes basic epistemological questions about the nature of historical inquiry. If time is fragmented, elliptical, and complex, then clearly

the empiricist approach to history posits an impossible knowledge process. The lamp Athos holds aloft in the cornfield seems a futile instrument for penetrating Tara's enigmatic 'webs of significance' and illuminating the 'truth' of its past. The act is self-defeating: we know that shining light on cobwebs with a view to seeing what is behind them simply makes the network of delicate strands seem more complex. In contrast, Bertolucci's approach to historical analysis in *Stratagem* is ostensibly aligned to Clifford Geertz's later notion that interpretation of the past should involve the 'thick description' of the 'webs of significance' themselves.<sup>33</sup>

*The Spider's Stratagem* is a film that clearly repudiates the view of history put forward by E.H. Carr, that 'History is the long struggle of man, by the exercise of his reason, to understand his environment and act upon it.'<sup>34</sup> While it appears that Athos Magnani initially sets out to understand the truth of his father's death with such a concept in mind, Bertolucci presents his endeavour as palpably absurd. Athos cannot exercise his reason, he cannot understand his environment, and he is certainly paralysed from acting upon it. Even the coherence of his identity outside Tara's discourse of antifascism is precarious. In short, Bertolucci's answer to Carr in *Stratagem* is aligned with Foucault's: 'The concept of Man is a fraud.'<sup>35</sup> *Stratagem* could thus be considered a film informed by (and anticipating) poststructuralist historiography in its rejection of the liberal vision of the autonomous individual. Athos visits Tara in search of truth, but finds it to be merely a category of power, and not of epistemology. *Stratagem* is therefore a literal exposition of Foucault's claim that both the subject who knows and the objects known are the 'effects of regimes of power/knowledge'. Athos thus 'becomes' his father in the film because he cannot exist outside the regimes of power/knowledge, outside discourse. However, he clearly cannot exist outside the 'gaze' of the camera, either. Just as poststructuralism erodes the concept of the autonomous historical actor, so, too, it extinguishes the notion of the objective, disinterested historian (or filmmaker). Accordingly, *Stratagem* is a film that is self-conscious about the present-centred nature of its description of the 'shape of time', as well as its processes of representation that facilitate such a description.

The extent to which *Stratagem* seems to anticipate poststructuralist historiography is particularly interesting given Bertolucci's own self-conscious leftism. The Marxist notion of class struggle as the mechanism of historical change (so naively sanctioned in *1900*) is considered by poststructuralists to be the opiate of intellectuals; an expression of a nineteenth-century need to create an overarching 'anthropology of man'. In contemplating these apparently contradictory intellectual currents, it is important to situate the making of *Stratagem* historically in the aftermath of 1968 and its heterogeneous and conflicting legacies. To some extent, the theoretical disparity between *The Spider's Stratagem* and Bertolucci's other film of 1970, *The Conformist*, evinces such contradictions. While *Stratagem* offers an 'archaeology' of antifascist discourse, *The Conformist* suggests a psychosexual explanation for fascism.

In this latter film, a young fascist, Marcello Clerici (Jean-Louis Trintignant), travels to Paris on his honeymoon to betray and murder his former philosophy teacher, Professor Luca Quadri (Enzo Tarascio). The film does not analyse the political and social circumstances that enabled the rise of fascism in Italy, but rather explains fascism as a manifestation of misaligned sexuality. Such an approach reflects the broad social interest that existed in the early 1970s in the psychological roots of the 'mass man' who is susceptible to fas-

cism,<sup>36</sup> but had mainly concentrated on the Nazi variant of fascism. A study by the Frankfurt School, *The Authoritarian Personality*; Wilhem Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1946);<sup>36</sup> and, especially, Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941) were all clearly influential in Bertolucci's representation of Marcello as a latent homosexual who is afraid of political and moral liberation. The explanation for Marcello's desire for normalcy through fascism is situated in the realm of his unconscious: his repressed memory of a traumatic childhood homosexual encounter with the effeminate chauffeur, Lino, coupled with his perception of the fascist state as the ultimate patriarch.<sup>38</sup> By emphasising the 'madness' of Marcello's real father, Bertolucci further highlights the connection between the fascist regime and insanity.

It is true that Bertolucci does not purport to represent the psychological explanation of fascism as universal. Manganiello's political sentiments, for example, are not explained at all, except that his name alludes to the *santo manganello*, the club used by fascist *squadristi* to assault dissidents.<sup>39</sup> He executes orders unthinkingly, and there are no hidden motives or complex psychology behind his fascism. He simply reproduces fascist rhetoric. He thinks 'cowards, perverts, Jews' are all the same and should be 'put against the wall together. It would be even better to eliminate them immediately, at birth'. He is the embodiment of the banality of Fascist evil. He sloughs off all blame for Anna Quadri's murder following her decision to join her husband, commenting merely that he 'followed instructions to the letter'.<sup>40</sup>

Manganiello's character seems aligned with the two-dimensional fascist profile espoused in *Novecento* of the depraved, murderous, and perverted Attila.<sup>41</sup> However, the sexual dynamism and potency of the socialist Anita and Olmo find no equivalent in *The Conformist*. The Quadris, while antifascists, are represented as politically and, in the case of Luca, sexually impotent. He is a hunchback intellectual, ostensibly modelled on Gramsci;<sup>42</sup> yet he lives in luxury in Paris while his colleagues in Italy are imprisoned, tortured, and murdered.<sup>43</sup> Anna's job as ballet teacher confirms that the Quadri's antifascism stems from liberal idealist impulses and not, as with Anita and Olmo, from Marxist convictions. Bertolucci has commented that 'the professor and his wife were the other side of the medallion of bourgeois Fascism, linked to it by a chain which is decadence. They are sympathetic, they are on the right side of the barricades, but they are still bourgeois and they are not saved'.<sup>44</sup>

These sentiments would seem to suggest that, where *Stratagem* resisted easy moral judgements in its description of antifascist discourse, the representation of fascism in *The Conformist* is more closely aligned with the simple history lessons of 1900. However, a consideration of *The Conformist's* (brief) representation of communism reveals that Bertolucci does not unequivocally endorse the myths of the resistance in this film. The key sequence involves a Parisian communist woman selling Marcello a posy of 'real' Parma violets. The flowers symbolically represent the myths of an 'authentic' Marxist resistance—they come from Parma, the birthplace of Verdi and Bertolucci and near to the town of Sabbioneta, the location used for the mythical antifascist town of Tara in *Stratagem*. Selling 'real Parma violets' is an allegory for a reading of Italian history as continuity and of the Italian Left as 'come from afar'. The woman follows Marcello after he buys the flowers, flanked by two 'starveling' children, singing the *Internationale*. She clearly is 'selling' Marxist ideology; however, she is also blind.<sup>45</sup>

So, too, is Marcello's friend Italo, the Fascist propagandist who delivers an apologia celebrating 'the Prussian aspect of Mussolini and the Latin aspect of Hitler'.<sup>46</sup> While the Parisian communist and the fascist apologist are clearly ideological opposites, their blindness suggests that their readings of history are isomorphic in their simplicity. As with the inhabitants of Tara, their adherence to a singular interpretation of the past and present inhibits their perception of 'the shape of time'. When Mussolini falls, Italo does not realise that he is still wearing the fascist badge. Marcello tells him that 'something has stuck to you'. In the context of Bertolucci's assertion that *The Conformist* is a film 'on the present, but it is the present dressed as the past',<sup>47</sup> it would seem that Marcello's statement is indicative of a perception in 1970 of a continuing fascist presence in Italian republic. Such an interpretation is reinforced by the fact that Marcello and Giulia Clerici have a child, Marta. At this point, the narrative of the film departs from that of the original novel by Alberto Moravia, where Giulia and the child are killed in an air raid. In the film, the child survives the fall of the regime, hence suggesting a repudiation of the notion of fascism as a 'parenthesis' in Italian history. More significantly, we last see the little girl saying her prayers and wearing her mother's (bourgeois) hat and fox furs, implicating continuities between fascist discourse and the dominant Christian Democratic conservative paradigm of the early seventies.<sup>48</sup>

As in *Stratagem*, Bertolucci delivers an epistemological critique of the theoretical assumptions underpinning fascist discourse. In a famous sequence, Marcello and the professor discuss Plato's cave. The chained prisoners 'see only the shadows that the fire projects on the cavern wall' and so 'mistake reality for the shadows of reality', just as, Quadri argues, 'happens today in Italy'. The analogy is a theoretical model for the spectator's experience when they watch a film,<sup>49</sup> but it is also a critique of liberal humanist historiography which assumes the existence of historical truth. Plato's cave highlights the constructed nature of notions of 'objectivity' in a world where images can only refer to other images, never to 'authentic' referents.<sup>50</sup> *The Conformist* primarily associates Fascism with the 'shadowy images' which people mistake for reality. For example, when Marcello is describing the way 'the statues rise above the wall', his hand snaps up into the fascist salute. Earlier in the film, we see massive fascist statues of an eagle and the bust of a man being carried through the fascist Ministry lobby, recalling the images that project the shadows onto the wall in the cave.

However, I would argue that images of antifascism are implicitly portrayed as being similarly shadowy and epistemologically fragile.<sup>51</sup> At the end of the film, the cave analogy is invoked again, except this time it is a *fallen* bust of Mussolini that casts a shadow in the headlight of a motorcycle as it is dragged by communists over Ponte Sant Angelo. Moreover, the film itself is a self-conscious collage of images from other films, including neorealist images conventionally associated with antifascism.<sup>52</sup> Giulia and Marcello's squalid apartment, for example, with its crucifix on the wall and old man sitting with a chicken, invokes the typical setting for neorealist films. The frequent appearance of chiaroscuro bars of light and shadow<sup>53</sup> (while themselves artifacts of 'film memory') connote the condemnation of the filmmaker to depict meaning using already existing codes of visual representation. Hence, Quadri's assassination is modelled on previous cinematic representations of Caesar's assassination. The lunatic asylum where Marcello's father lives is a Fellinian expanse of all-white space.<sup>54</sup> Bertolucci actively foregrounds the artificiality of cinematic representations of time and space. During Marcello and Giulia's train journey to Paris, for example, there is no attempt to make the scene outside the window of the train



to Paris appear real. Rather, it is a 'film within a film'; an illogical play of time, light, and colour, which is sharply juxtaposed to the 'realism' of the scene inside the train.<sup>55</sup>

The screen/window of the train is also linked to Bertolucci's depiction of Marcello as 'the spectator of his own life, of his own acts'.<sup>56</sup> Later in the film, we see him gaze passively through the glass of the car window while Anna Quadri desperately screams for help after the assassination of her husband. The fact that Marcello perceives her panic as mere spectacle reflects Bertolucci's depiction of fascism as a form of moral passivity linked to psychology. Marcello does not see himself as morally accountable for his part in the orchestration of the assassination, since his 'fascist' (i.e., mentally disturbed) logic tells him that 'blood washes away blood'. The temporal and spatial dimensions of *The Conformist* mimic his unbalanced subjectivity. Space is exaggerated and distorted, characters are replicated, and time is fragmented.<sup>57</sup>

Bertolucci's description of 'the shape of time' in *The Conformist* is therefore implicitly linked to his psychosexual 'explanation' for fascism. In contrast, *The Spider's Stratagem* manipulates time in its illustration of the idea that a single interpretation of the past implicates a single interpretation of the present and future; that a society void of political prescription and debate (where 'we are all friends here' is all that needs to be said) is a society that does not change. Both films are self-consciously about the present. They also foreground the processes of representation that facilitate their 're-visioning' of history, and are thus extremely useful, if somewhat conflicting, sources, for helping the historian to understand early 1970s attitudes toward fascism and antifascism. As cinematic representations of the past, *The Spider's Stratagem* and *The Conformist* conceptualise time in ways that allow them to address what George Mosse considered to be the chief problem facing any historian, 'to capture the irrational by an exercise of the rational mind'.<sup>58</sup>

## NOTES

1. Gerge Kubler, quoted in A. Dalle Vacche, *The Body in the Mirror: Shapes of History in Italian Cinema* (Princeton, 1992), p. 1.
2. Bertolucci, quoted in R. Kilker, *Bernardo Bertolucci* (London, 1985), p. 36.
3. Foucault, quoted in A. Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley, 1993), p. 8.
4. Deleuze, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 129.
5. P. Nichols, quoted in R.J.B. Bosworth, 'Bertolucci, 1900 and the Myth of Fascism', *European History Quarterly*, 19, 1989, p. 56.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
7. Bernardo Bertolucci quoted in Y. Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci* (Detroit, 1995), p. 62 from 'Bernardo Bertolucci seminar', *American Film Institute Dialogue on Film*, 3 no. 5 April, 1974, p. 16.
8. Bosworth, *op.cit.*, p. 37.
9. T. Kline, *Bertolucci's Dream Loom: a Psychoanalytic Study of Cinema*, (Oxford, 1983), p. 72.
10. Loshitzky, *op.cit.*, p. 57.
11. 1936, the year Tara 'remembers' as one of heroic resistance, has been thought of by historians as the 'consensus' period. Dalle Vacche has noted that it was also the year of the Ethiopian Campaign, where antifascism was mostly practised outside Italy. *Op.cit.*, p. 224.
12. Arguably, *Stratagem* foreshadows current historiographical discussions of memory and history. Bertolucci's representation of Tara's collective acts of remembrance foreground the dialectic between remembering and forgetting implicated in the creation of sites of memory. See P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*', *Representations*, 26, 1989, p. 7.

13. Kline, *op.cit.*, pp. 72, 77.
14. Dalle Vacche, *op.cit.*, p. 237.
15. R. Roud, 'Fathers and Sons', *Sight and Sound*, 40, 1971, p. 61.
16. Kolker, *Bertolucci*, p. 105.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
18. Di Sica has said that through neo-realism 'we sought to liberate ourselves from the weight of our faults', quoted in Bosworth, *op.cit.*, p. 51.
19. Dalle Vacche, *op.cit.*, p. 223.
20. Kolker extensively discusses the way that René Magritte's paintings have informed the self-reflexive aspect of *The Spider's Stratagem*—Magritte as the maker of 'paintings about painting and the way the world is perceived through the conventions of representation' (*Bertolucci*, p. 108).
21. *The Spider's Stratagem* is also influenced by Italo Calvino's novel of 1947, *The Path to the Spider's Nests*, which deals with the resistance between 1943 and 1945.
22. Kolker, *Bertolucci*, p. 109.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 106. It could be argued that Bertolucci's choice of a Hollywood intertext was quite deliberate, since many neo-realist films defensively defined themselves against Hollywood. The nationalist quality to neo-realism is further emphasised when Athos asks the young boy holding the rabbit whether he has any American cigarettes. He replies, 'nothing foreign'.
24. For a detailed analysis of the ways *Rigoletto* informs the narrative of *Stratagem*, see Kolker, *Bertolucci*, p. 120.
25. Bertolucci, quoted in Bosworth, *op.cit.*, p. 47.
26. Benedetto Croce, quoted in R. Ben-Ghiat, 'Fascism, Writing and Memory: The Realist Aesthetic of Italy, 1930–1950', *Journal of Modern History*, 67, 1995, p. 660.
27. Alberto Moravia, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 660.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Bocelli, quoted in *Ibid.*
30. Moravia, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 663
31. *Ibid.*, p. 651.
32. Dalle Vacche, *op.cit.*, p. 224.
33. C. Geertz, 'Thick Description: Towards an Interpretative Theory of Culture' in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London, 1993), p. 5.
34. E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 134.
35. I. Hacking, quoted in C. Dean, 'The Productive Hypothesis: Foucault, Gender, and the History of Sexuality', *History and Theory*, 33, 1994, p. 295.
36. J. Mellen, 'Fascism in Contemporary Film', *Film Quarterly*, 24, 1973, p. 2.
37. Wilhelm Reich postulated a connection between repressed sexuality and vulnerability to Fascism. *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York, 1946).
38. Loshitzky, *op.cit.*, p. 65.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
40. M. Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neo-Realism* (Princeton, 1986), p. 295.
41. Although it could be argued that Attila is evil in a much more active and calculating way. Where Maganiello and Marcello simply allow brutalities to occur, Attila actually takes pleasure in the killing cats, murdering children, and crushing old women behind doors.
42. Quadri's death in *The Conformist* is also loosely based on the assassination of the heretical socialist Carlo Rosselli in 1937. Stanislaw G. Pugliese, 'Death in Exile: The Assassination of Carlo Rosselli' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 32, 1997, pp. 305–319, offering a detailed account of the killing.
43. Kolker discusses in some detail the extent to which Luca embodies Bertolucci's anxieties about the contradictions inherent in being a middle-class, left-wing intellectual in *Bertolucci*, p. 216. Professor Quadri's character is also a famous in-joke on Jean-Luc Godard. In the film, Bertolucci gives Luca Quadri Godard's phone number, address, and middle name and then kills him. Bertolucci has said that '*The Conformist* is a story about me and Godard. . . . I'm Marcello and I make Fascist movies and I want to kill Godard who is a revolutionary, who makes revolutionary movies and was my teacher'. Quoted in Kline, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

44. B. Bertolucci, 'The Conformist: An Interview with Marilyn Goldin', *Sight and Sound*, 40, 1971, p. 66.
45. Ironically, the blindness of her act prophetically foreshadows the great intellectual blindness Bertolucci himself suffered in selling *1900*. Like the violets, the film 'sold' a grandiose Marxist vision of modern Italy as a purely commercial product. (*1900* was the most commercial of Bertolucci's films in the sense of using American finance and actors).
46. Italo claims that, despite his blindness, he is never mistaken in detecting normalcy. Yet we see that he is wearing shoes of different colours.
47. Bertolucci, from J. Mellen, 'A conversation with Bernardo Bertolucci' quoted in Loshitzky, *op.cit.*, p. 67.
48. In 1968, the DC had 39.1 percent of the vote (cf. PCI's 26.9 percent). In 1972 this had dropped slightly to 38.8 percent (cf. PCI's 27.2 percent). From P.A. Allum, *Italy - Republic without Government?* (W.W. Norton, 1973), pp. 64–65.
49. This aspect has been extensively discussed in the critical literature of the film, and even by Bertolucci himself: 'When you read the Cave of Plato's, the cave is exactly like the theatre and the background is the screen and Plato says there is a fire and people walking the from of the fire and the fire projects shadows in the background of the cave. Its the invention of cinema'. Quoted in Marcus, *op.cit.*, p. 301.
50. Loshitzky, *op.cit.*, p. 58.
51. An examination of the literature surrounding the film's critical reception at the time indicates, to the contrary, that the film was simply intended to 'promote disgust towards and rejection of fascism'. J. Mellen, 'Fascism in Contemporary Film', *Film Quarterly*, XXIV, 1971, p. 2.
52. Although, as previously discussed, contemporary critics are finding major continuities between neo-realist cinema and what went before. See Ben-Ghiat, *op.cit.*
53. These 'bars' of light appear constantly in the film, from the shadows cast from the venetian blinds in Giulia's parents' apartment (although no blinds are actually visible) and the stripes of her dress, to the pattern of light and shadow created by the tall trees in the scene of Quadri's assassination.
54. Generally, the film's lighting is self-consciously modelled on the cinema of Welles, Ophuls, and Eisenstein.
55. Bertolucci has described the window as 'like a magic lantern. So, outsider time is very surrealistic, very magic, because in two minutes you have sunset and night, and also some dissolved in the window but not in the train'. Quoted in Kline, *op.cit.*, p. 95.
56. Magny, translated by Loshitzky, p. 62.
57. Dominique Sanda appears in three roles in the film, as Anna, Quadri's wife, as a prostitute in a brothel, and again in a love scene with the Fascist Minister. Kolker argues that, since there is no narrative assurance that these characters are supposed to be the same woman, the duplication simply reinforces the abnormality of Marcello's perception, that he views all women as either whores (Anna) or 'all bed and kitchen' (Giulia).
58. Mosse, quoted in Emilo Gentile, 'Fascism in Italian Historiography: In Search of an Individual Historical Identity', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 21, 56, 1986, p. 179.