



MAGICAL REALISM: THE FILM FABLES OF THE TAVIANI BROTHERS

A Man for Burning

A Man for Burning aka **This Man Is for Burning**
(Un uomo da bruciare)

Directors: Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani,
Valentino Orsini

Production Companies: Ager Cinematografica,
Alfa Cinematografica, Sancro Film

Producers: Henryk Chroszicki, G. De Negri,
Alfonso Sansone

Script Supervisor: Rosalia Raffio

Screenplay: Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani,
Valentino Orsini

Cinematographer: Antonio Secchi

Camera Operator: Luigi Kuveiller

Editor: Lionello Massobrio

Art Director: Piero Poletto

Costumes: Lina Nerli Taviani

Music: Gianfranco Intra

Sound Mixer: Giuseppe Mangione

Cast:

Gian Maria Volonté (*Salvatore Carnevale*)

Didi Perego (*Barbara*)

Spyros Focas (*Jachino*)

Turi Ferro (*Don Vincenzo*)

Marina Malfatti (*Wilma*)

Lydia Alfonsi (*Francesca*)

Marcella Rovena (*Francesca's mother*)

Vittorio Duse (*Bastiano*)

Italy 1962

90 mins

Digital

MAGICAL REALISM: THE FILM FABLES OF THE TAVIANI BROTHERS

Elective Affinities Le affinità elettive

Thu 1 Feb 20:35 (+ intro by season curator Adrian
Wootton); Wed 21 Feb 18:30

A Man for Burning (aka This Man is For Burning)

Un uomo da bruciare

Fri 2 Feb 18:10; Sat 10 Feb 20:40

St. Michael Had a Rooster San Michele aveva un
gallo

Sun 4 Feb 13:30; Mon 12 Feb 20:40

Allonsanfàn Allonsanfàn

Wed 7 Feb 18:20; Sat 24 Feb 20:25

Kaos

Sat 10 Feb 14:40; Sun 25 Feb 14:30

Padre Padrone

Sun 11 Feb 15:20; Thu 22 Feb 20:45

Wondrous Boccaccio Meraviglioso Boccaccio

Mon 19 Feb 18:45; Mon 26 Feb 20:40

You Laugh Tu ridi

Fri 23 Feb 18:10; Wed 28 Feb 20:50

Caesar Must Die Cesare deve morire

Sat 24 Feb 12:00; Thu 29 Feb 20:50

With thanks to

Carla Cattani, Livia Azzolini, Monica Moscato and
Erika Allegrucci at Cinecittà.

Presented in collaboration with the Italian Embassy
in London and the Italian Cultural Institute. Co-
produced by Cinecittà, Rome.

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

Following a series of acclaimed shorts and a documentary, the Taviani Brothers' narrative feature debut was co-directed with early collaborator Valentino Orsini. Set in rural Sicily, this powerful drama depicts the real-life story of a union organiser who attempts to lead peasant farmers in revolt against the local Mafia. In its cinematic sweep and gritty authenticity, the film evinces the influence of Roberto Rossellini.

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The Taviani brothers' interest in the cinema began in 1948, after seeing Rossellini's *Paisà*. (In their 1968 film, *Under the Sign of Scorpio*, there is a direct quotation from *Paisà* in the scene where a group of women, with hands bound, leap into the water like Rossellini's partisans.) They met Valentino Orsini and began a collaboration with him, first as co-director and screenwriter and later as producer. They began to explore the road of neo-realism opened up by Rossellini, first in the form of slice-of-life, *viva voce* theatre pieces ('neo-realism with a pinch of Meyerhold and Brecht'), set in their birthplace, San Miniato, near Pisa.

One of these early plays, *Delio*, the story of a bourgeois musicologist and art critic who attempts to break out of his class barriers, marrying a peasant's daughter and joining the Communist party, was revived in 1975 as a radio play, *Ruffo '60*, and performed on Italian radio under the direction of the authors, who built it up 'rather like the soundtrack of a film'. After the trauma of events in Hungary, Ruffo-Delio becomes estranged from wife, mother and party, in an unsuccessful and finally fatal effort to find a semblance of order in his own life. As such, he is the prototype of a long line of Taviani protagonists whose artistic and political aspirations are out of joint with the historical, political and material forces of their environment, with most notable resemblances to Fulvio, the high born revolutionary who betrays his comrades in *Allonsanfàn* (1973-74).

After working in the 50s as assistants to various minor directors in Rome, also participating in an unrealised Rossellini project, and as screenwriters, notably on an unrealised film version of Italo Svevo's novel *As a Man Grows Older*, the Taviani brothers directed a number of documentaries between 1955 and 1960. These culminated in *Italy Is Not a Poor Country*, made in collaboration with Joris Ivens. The brothers shot the final episode of the Ivens film in Sicily, where they had previously done research for a documentary about the famous Sicilian trade union leader Salvatore Carnevale, assassinated by the Mafia some years earlier. The Tavianis considered the Ivens film as more of a fiction work than a documentary, and decided to embark on their own fiction film, based on the life of Carnevale, *Un uomo da bruciare* (*A Man for Burning*), with Gian Maria Volonté in his cinematic debut.

Co-produced by
Cinecittà, Rome

CINECITTÀ

The monograph *Paolo & Vittorio Taviani*, published by Cinecittà, and featuring an article by season curator Adrian Wootton, will be available during the season.

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They were quick to implement the theatrical lessons of Brecht – just as *Ruffo '60* has a detached, impersonal and ironic narrative style, so the protagonist of *Un uomo da bruciare* was treated in an ironic, often belittling mode, as an anti-hero, awkward, arrogant and messianic almost to the point of megalomania, in the context of a homage to 'neo-realism, the Resistance, and the postwar peasants' and workers' movement'. Alienation, detachment, and also a self-conscious presentational theatricality: Salvatore, a 'man with a cinema in his head', envisages his own death in a series of flash-forwards, and orates to the peasants in verse from the stage of a theatre. Also, an epic, 'choral' use of long-shot and tracking shot to depict the peasants' way of life and mode of work – their occupation of a farm under Salvatore's guidance, their labour in the mines, and the final mass demonstration at Salvatore's funeral.

Sequences such as these move beyond the limits of neo-realism to a more expressionist visual examination of the relation of the peasants to the land. They follow the lead of *Paisà*, 'a work which goes beyond the definition of neo-realism – it is not just a film about the Resistance, but also, because of the kind of framing it uses, and its long tracking shots, a film about the struggle between man and nature. It is probably this preference for long tracking shots that we have retained most.' Along with this stylistic objectification there is a deeply rooted, sympathetic treatment of the land, and the peasants' encounters with the Mafia, who are treated throughout in a de-mystified, unglamorised and unstylised way. In short, there is a strong sense of sympathetic involvement with their characters, which cuts across the distancing techniques they have adopted from Brecht.

'As far as Italian culture is concerned,' they say, 'Brecht represents a de-provincialisation, and to us in particular, a violent refusal of naturalism and even neo-realism...

Alienation and detachment we go along with. But we're also Neapolitans, which means we're all for a totally expressive, expansive viscosity which is not exactly Brechtian... So we swing between moments of great detachment from the material we treat to other moments of considerable involvement.'

The Tavianis take care to distinguish realism from naturalism, and already in *Un uomo da bruciare* there are signs of this dialectical interplay between emotional realism and epic theatricality which is increasingly to characterise their work.

Tony Mitchell, *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1979