



MAGICAL REALISM: THE FILM FABLES OF THE TAVIANI BROTHERS

Allonsanfan

Allonsanfan (Allonsanfàn)

Directors: Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani

Production Company: Una Cooperativa Cinematografica

Producer: Giuliani G. De Negri

Associate Producer: Giuseppe Francone

Production Manager: Giancarlo Di Fonzo

Production Supervisor: Bruno Liconti

Collaborator: Tonino Paoletti

Assistant Director: Ferruccio Castronuovo, Stefano Guerrieri

Script: Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani

Photography: Giuseppe Ruzzolini

Editor: Roberto Perpignani

Art Director: Giovanni Sbarra

Costumes: Lina Nerli Taviani

Music: Ennio Morricone

Music Director: Bruno Nicolai

Sound Recording: Sergio Buzi

Sound Re-recording: Venanzio Biraschi

Sound Effects: Alvaro Gramigna, Fernando Caso

Cast:

Marcello Mastroianni (*Fulvio Imbriani*)

Lea Massari (*Charlotte*)

Mimsy Farmer (*Francesca*)

Laura Betti (*Esther*)

Renato De Carmine (*Costantino*)

Bruno Cirino (*Tito*)

Claudio Cassinelli (*Lionello*)

Benjamin Lev (*Vanni Gavino aka 'Vanni Peste'*)

Stanko Molnar (*Allonsanfàn*)

Biagio Pelligra (*priest*)

Alderice Casali (*Concetta*)

Luisa De Santis (*Fiorella*)

Michel Berger

Raul Cabrera

Roberto Frau

Cyrille Spiga

Ermanno Taviani

Francesca Taviani

Stavros Tornes

Piergiovanni Anchisi

Luis la Torre

Carla Mancini

Bruna Righetti

Italy 1974

113 mins

Digital

Restored by Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia – Cineteca Nazionale and by Cinecittà S.p.A. at the laboratory at Cinecittà S.p.A.

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SIGHT AND SOUND

Returning to the chaos of 19th-century Italy, the Tavianis tell the story of a once-renowned aristocratic activist (a superb Marcello Mastroianni), who is sick of all the violence and conflict, whose political idealism is shattered by a catastrophic betrayal. This piercing portrait is a pointed yet subtle reflection on modern Italy, rendered all the more impressive by its meticulous eye for detail.

bfi.org.uk

A contemporary review

Allonsanfan is a curious film, especially when considered in the light of the Tavianis' subsequent *Padre Padrone*. The later film rests on an unusual if not very profound metaphor (the central character's acquisition of language is paralleled by a steady 'enrichment' of the film's own narrative syntax), which enables the Tavianis to make their emotional /moral /political points with great ease and directness. *Allonsanfan*, on the other hand, is a film of extraordinary density and allusiveness from its opening moments, a torrent of baroque images, extravagant musics and stylistic rhetoric, posited somewhere between 19th-century melodrama and popular opera.

The enormous differences between the two movies are broadly related to changes within the Italian left between 1974 and 1977. Whatever new hope the simplicity of *Padre Padrone* reflects, *Allonsanfan* was born of what Vittorio Taviani (in a 1974 interview) described as despair and impatience; the climate of political frustration produced a film in which 'two movements ... lead with the same force in two opposite directions—one is towards regression, the loss of one's self and the world, the other is towards desire and the need to live with the world'. This genesis suggests an improbable kinship with Godard and Gorin's *Vladimir and Rosa* (the work of 'two pissed-off militants' – Gorin), another movie whose deeply felt pessimism is manifest in its choice of a negative example for a subject, and whose residual optimism is confined to its playful adventurousness with form and language.

The force of *Allonsanfan*'s script is overwhelmingly negative: it spends most of its time exploring the psychology of Fulvio's all-round spinelessness, pausing only to make a fairly devastating critique of left-wing adventurism in its portrayal of The Sublime Brethren. At the same time, though, the film is a joyful celebration of the spirit of revolution. This is a low-key celebration at the narrative level: the character Allonsanfan himself is proposed as the incarnation of this spirit (hence his name, whose origins are discreetly underlined when the Brethren huddle in the prow of their ship as it sails through the night, nearing their destination, and sing the 'Marseillaise' to keep their spirits up), but his vital role is deliberately kept on the fringes of the main action.

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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

Allonsanfan 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.

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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At the cinematic level, though, the celebration is tumultuous: the sheer vigour of the *mise en scène* constantly fights against the thrust of the narrative, counterpointing each new facet of Fulvio's treachery with an excited – and exciting – presentation of another visual or aural possibility. Fulvio's forlorn nostalgia for his own 'innocent' youth is conjured through his identification with the nephew who has been given his name, the son of his vulgar sister Esther, but this is realised in the most unexpected way: at the family dinner table, Esther recalls young Fulvio's habit of seeing each member of his family as a different colour; the adult Fulvio (at this point still disguised as a monk) looks round the table, and the Tavianis show his subjective views of the assembled relatives, each through a different colour filter; gold, the colour that young Fulvio always saw himself, is projected on to his nephew namesake at the other end of the table. The effect is cumbersome in description, but the film takes only four shots to make the point, and the poetry of its method introduces questions about subjectivity, colour expressionism and memory without blurring the emphasis on Fulvio's psychology.

The immediacy of such florid effects is frankly derived from the tradition of Verdi opera, a source that the Tavianis acknowledge by having the sound of an orchestra tuning up under the opening credits, and by making Ennio Morricone's wonderful score integral to the narrative at every turn.

Allonsanfan consequently aligns itself with other Italian films like Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* and Bertolucci's *The Spider's Stratagem* as a paean to cinema as a revolutionary medium, a medium which can make rhetorical use of material from earlier films, literature or opera, but revitalise it in the transcription. The result may be somewhat muted politically, but it's aesthetically thrilling.

Tony Rayns, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, August 1978