



MAGICAL REALISM: THE FILM FABLES OF THE TAVIANI BROTHERS

The Night of the Shooting Stars

The Night of the Shooting Stars (La notte di San Lorenzo)

Directors: Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani

Production Companies: RAI, Ager Cinematografica

Producer: Giuliani G. De Negri

Production Manager: Luciano Balducci

Production Assistant: Grazia Volpi

Assistant Director: Roberto Aristarco

Screenplay: Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani, Giuliani

Script Collaborator: Tonino Guerra

Director of Photography: Franco Di Giacomo

Editor: Roberto Perpignani

Art Director: Gianni Sbarra

Costumes: Lina Nerli Taviani

Make-up: Gloria Fava

Music: Nicola Piovani

Sound Recording: Fausto Ancillai

Sound Engineer: Hubrecht Nijhuis

Cast:

Omero Antonutti (*Galvano Galvani*)

Margarita Lozano (*Concetta*)

Claudio Bigagli (*Corrado*)

Massimo Bonetti (*Nicola*)

Norma Martelli (*Ivana*)

Enrica Maria Modugno (*Mara*)

Sabina Vannucchi (*Rossana*)

Dario Cantarelli (*priest*)

Sergio Dagliana (*Olinto*)

Giuseppe Furia (*Requiem*)

Paolo Hendel (*Dilvo*)

Laura Mannucchi (*Signora Naldini*)

Rinaldo Mirannati (*Attorney Migliorati*)

Donata Piacentini (*Nicola's mother*)

Franco Piacentini (*Nicola's father*)

Antonio Prester (*Tuminello, the Sicilian-American*)

David Riondino (*Giglioli*)

Gianfranco Salemi (*man in the bus*)

Massimo Sarchielli (*Father Marmugi*)

Mario Spallino (*Bruno*)

Mirio Guidelli (*Duilio*)

Titta Guidelli (*Alfredina, Galvano's Daughter*)

Antonella Guidelli (*Renata*)

Giovanni Guidelli (*Marmugi Jr*)

Micol Guidelli (*Cecilia*)

Miriam Guidelli (*Bellindia*)

Samanta Boi (*Rosanna as a child*)

Beatrice Bardelli (*woman in canteen*)

Sauro Baschieri, Luca Canardi, Giuseppe Lo Parco,

Gianni Mantelli, Walter Pardini, Daniele Trambusti
(*fascists*)

Andrea De Bari (*Rosanna's fascist cousin*)

Marco Fastame (*Gino*)

Edoardo Gazzetti (*Egisto*)

Carlo Genzini (*Ruggero*)

Vinicio Gioli (*Bellindia's father*)

Andrea Giuntini (*Gufo*)

Evelina Gori (*old peasant woman*)

Guido Marziali (*Naldini*)

Luciana Mattioli (*woman of the mountain*)

Mauro Monni (*Dante*)

Carla Montemagno, Vito Montemagno,

Lorenzo Montemagno (*family on the road*)

Gianfranco Morandi (*seminarist*)

Roberta Pinzauti (*old peasant woman's niece*)

Paolo Ricchi (*German who sings*)

Beatrice Righini (*Migliorati's daughter*)

Alessandra Toesca, Maria Toesca, Titti Travaglino
(*Rosanna's friend*)

Giuseppe Valdisserra (*peasant*)

Graziella Galvani (*Signora Migliorati*)

La notte di San Lorenzo, like the Taviani brothers' previous films, belongs to a cinema of rhetoric. The overall structure is loose, defined in broad strokes that can be grasped immediately and thereafter taken for granted, and this structure is ultimately a pretext for a succession of bravura gestures, visual and musical hyperboles, in which emotion, spectacle and ideology merge into one. The Tavianis have often indicated that the roots of this approach lie in the aural traditions of Tuscany, where they were born and raised, and the vigour and assertiveness of their style clearly has something in common with the technique of a storyteller in a public square. But their films also brim over with a specifically filmic rhetoric – a repertoire of striking camera movements, heightened colours, 'exemplary' compositions, musical underlinings – that has equally obvious connections with other recent work from the broad spectrum of the Italian left, from the operatic emotionalism of Bertolucci to the 'absurd' mannerism of Sergio Leone.

The pretext for *La notte di San Lorenzo* is storytelling itself: a young mother in the present tells her infant child a story from the past. Cecilia's voice sporadically appears on the soundtrack as the narrator, and some of the fantasy images are clearly designed to evoke the perceptions of a six-year-old child, inspired by church paintings and stories of Hector and Andromache. But the Tavianis push this device no further than it suits them: many of the events in the film are seen from the perspective of other characters, most often Galvano's, and much that transpires is neither witnessed by the child Cecilia nor accessible to the adult Cecilia. Once the story begins to unfold, in other words, it has a momentum of its own and its form is governed by other considerations.

For the Tavianis, it represents another response to their disillusionment with contemporary politics: 'Perhaps we cannot understand and overcome the leaden years we're living through now unless we contrast them with the years of sparkling diamonds.' Unlike, say, *Allonsanfan*, the film makes no direct comment on the confusions and setbacks of the present, but instead celebrates a past in which issues seem clearcut and ideology is synonymous with action. Cecilia's story becomes the key to a kind of collective memory of the struggle for the liberation of Tuscany. The scale, finally, is that of an epic, a quintessentially Tavianian folk-epic in the vein of *Sotto il segno dello Scorpione*.

The film's vision integrates some elementary political lessons (it is better to move than to stay put, and better to fight than to run) and a great many stories-within-the-story, tales of individual resistance fighters as good sons and daughters of the earth, each designed in its way to subsume sexual and psychological problems into the emotional thrust of the action. A shell explodes offscreen; a pear falls to the ground; Corrado emerges from hiding in a field, strips, washes and hurries off to his wedding with the very pregnant Bellindia. The Tavianis' development of the Corrado-Bellindia story is, in fact, typical of their method. After the hasty wedding, clearly prompted less by the priest's prophecies of Judgement Day punishments for living in sin than by simple fears of separation, the couple join Galvano's flight across country. When Bellindia

Giorgio Naddi (*bishop*)
Renata Zamengo (*La Scardigli, Bellindia's mother*)
Italy 1982
107 mins
Digital (restoration)

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

The screening on Tue 12 Mar will include an
extended intro by season curator Adrian Wootton

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The Subversives I sovversivi

Fri 1 Mar 18:20; Tue 5 Mar 20:40

The Night of the Shooting Stars

La notte di San Lorenzo

Sat 2 Mar 15:45; Tue 12 Mar 20:20 + extended intro by
season curator Adrian Wootton

Good Morning Babylon Good Morning, Babilonia

Sat 2 Mar 18:10; Thu 7 Mar 20:40

The Lark Farm La masseria delle allodole

Sat 2 Mar 20:40; Sun 10 Mar 18:15

The Meadow Il prato

Sun 3 Mar 12:30; Sat 9 Mar 18:20

Rainbow: A Private Affair Una questione privata

Fri 8 Mar 17:55; Mon 11 Mar 21:00

Leonora Addio

Sat 9 Mar 20:40; Wed 13 Mar 17:50

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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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decides to go back to the cathedral, their parting words are a discussion of what they should name their child; Corrado, assuming that it will be a boy, suggests naming it after his father, then momentarily forgets that his father's name was Giovanni. Bellindia accepts the suggestion, without great enthusiasm. After witnessing the massacre in the cathedral, Corrado tries to repress the memory of its horror ... until the moment when he and the other refugees decide to stand and fight alongside the guerrillas. Dante tells the new recruits that they must adopt new names; Corrado radiantly affirms that his will be 'Giovanni' and, from that point, he is an unproblematic figure.

Other 'blockages' are explicitly linked to fantasy, both collective (the townspeople wishfully hallucinating the approach of the Americans when they hear a record of 'John Brown's Body') and personal (the Sicilian girl who breaks cover when she hears that there is a Sicilian-American division in the 5th Army, and is immediately gunned down by a German, imagines in her dying moments a conversation with her American liberator, whose ancestors came from her own village). The panorama of human passions includes an extremely lascivious adultery, a cluster of fond memory-flashbacks as the townspeople hear their homes explode in the distance, and Galvano's victory over his sexual repressions.

Like all rhetoric, the Tavianis' is predicted on an assumption of the audience's willingness to listen. Their films are more morale-boosters for the committed than arguments for the unconverted. They make their visions as seductive as possible, seeking audience identification more often than detachment, and using elements like music (Nicola Piovani's score here is a more than adequate stand-in for the absent Morricone) to aid the process. They are the most plausible left-wing populists in Italian cinema, and it takes only the most minimal suspension of disbelief to find *La notte di San Lorenzo* as inspiring as they intended it to be.

Tony Rayns, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, December 1982