

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI (1941 – 2018)

LIFE

Bernardo Bertolucci was born into a sophisticated and international family. His mother, who was a professor of literature, had been born in Australia to an Italian father and an Irish mother. Bernardo's father was a poet and film critic, among other things. Raised in the Italian city of Parma, with his younger brother, Bertolucci spent his early teens writing poetry and won a prestigious 'First Book Prize' when he was 20. But, even at that early age, his real passion was for film, which he developed while attending film screenings with his father. Still in his teens, he shot two short 16mm films with his brother Giuseppe (who also became a director). Having dropped out of university, Bertolucci got his first break as an assistant to Pasolini, and when he was only 22, he submitted his first feature film (*The Grim Reaper*, based on a story by Pasolini) to the Venice Film Festival. That film and its successor (*Before the Revolution*, 1964) gained him critical recognition but failed at the box office. Unable to attract funding for another feature, he worked on documentary films. Then, in 1970, his early masterpiece, *The Conformist*, revealed his extraordinary skill in combining politics, sexuality and history into a compelling narrative.

The huge success of that film enabled Bertolucci to work without financial constraints and led to his most controversial film, *Last Tango in Paris* (1972). The raw and explicit sex scenes gained enormous publicity but also prompted a criminal case against the director, which resulted in a four-month prison sentence. His next three films (*1900*, 1976, *Luna*, 1979, and *The Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man*, 1981) did not win much critical or popular acclaim and represented a setback to the director. *The Last Emperor* (1987), however, soon restored his reputation, sweeping the Oscars and attracting large audiences around the world. That film and the two that followed (*The Sheltering Sky*, 1990, and *Little Buddha*, 1993) are sometimes grouped together as his 'Eastern trilogy,' although the Chinese epic film is in a class of its own.

His next three films—*Stealing Beauty* (1996), *Besieged* (1998) and *The Dreamers* (2003)—might also be considered a trilogy in that they share a theme of isolation. Both the first and last of this threesome are quintessential Bertolucci films with their focus on sexual politics. Shortly after the release of *The Dreamers*, however, Bertolucci underwent a number of back operations that resulted in the loss of his legs. Confined to a wheelchair, it was nearly a decade before his next and final film (*Me and You*) was released in 2012. The two lead characters, themselves confined to a basement, enact a typical Bertolucci story of youthful idealism, tenderness and tragedy.

The director, one of the major figures of his or any generation, is noted for many aspects of film-making, not least his personal love of the medium. As he said in an interview, 'This is something that I dream about: to live films, to arrive at the point at which one can live for films, can think cinematographically, eat cinematographically, sleep cinematographically, as a poet, a painter, lives, eats, sleeps painting.'

Bertolucci married film actress Adriana Asti, who was the female lead in *Before the Revolution*. After their divorce, he married British screenwriter Clare Peploe in 1978. The director died of lung cancer in 2018, aged 77. He did not have any children

ACHIEVEMENTS

Bernardo Bertolucci won many major awards during his career, including the Golden Bear at Berlin and the Sutherland Trophy in London for *The Conformist* (1970). *The Last Emperor* won dozens of awards across the world, including nine Oscars. In 2007, Bertolucci received the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival for his life's work, and in 2011 he received an Honorary Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival.

FILMOGRAPHY (feature films only)

The Grim Reaper (La commare secca), 1962
Before the Revolution (Prima della rivoluzione), 1964
Partner, 1968
The Spider's Stratagem (La strategia del ragno), 1970
The Conformist (Il conformista), 1970
Last Tango in Paris, 1972
1900 (Novecento), 1976
Luna, 1979
Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man (Tragedia di un uomo ridicolo), 1981
The Last Emperor, 1987
The Sheltering Sky, 1990
Little Buddha, 1993
Stealing Beauty, 1996
Besieged, 1998
The Dreamers, 2003
Me and You (Io e Te), 2012

THEMES

1. Love

Before the Revolution The young protagonist of this autobiographical film, a radical student named Fabrizio, falls in love with and carries on a sexual affair with Gina, his aunt. Their transgressive relationship hits the rocks when naïve Fabrizio is hurt by Gina's 'betrayal' of him with a stranger. Confused, Fabrizio is eventually led back to his fiancé, an innocent-looking girl from a 'nice' family. The end of his experimental love affair is matched by his withdrawal from radical politics.

The Conformist Like Fabrizio, Marcello (the protagonist of *The Conformist*), opts for conformity when he marries sweet-faced Giulia. But along the way, Marcello has fallen in love with sexy Anna, the wife of a man he has been sent to assassinate in Paris. Also like Fabrizio, Marcello is unable to disentangle his emotional life from his political mission and ends up complicit in Anna's murder. Killing that illicit love, though, is just what he wants, in order that he can resume his conformist life.

The Dreamers Bertolucci's fascination with Freudian themes is also evident in *The Dreamers*, where the intimacy between brother and sister teeters on the edge of sexuality. Throughout the film, we see that Théo and Isabelle are psychologically and physically close, as confirmed by the matching birthmarks on their shoulders. Their suffocating sibling love is precisely what prevents Mathew, their American friend, from forming a lasting relationship with either one, although he becomes Isabelle's lover. The story ends with Isabelle wanting reassurance from Théo that their love is 'forever.'

Stealing Beauty A young woman's search for love is the central theme of this late Bertolucci film set in the beautiful Tuscany hills. Lucy is hoping to hook up with Niccolo, an Italian boy she met on an earlier visit, but she finds that he is involved with another girl. She is subjected to some heavy flirting by an older man before finally having a sexual experience with Osvaldo, the younger brother of the first Italian boy. Everything is fine because it turns out that Osvaldo (not Niccolo) wrote the love letter to her that she cherishes so much. Lucy also finds another kind of love with her biological father, the sculptor Ian.

The Sheltering Sky Port and Kit, the two main characters in this film, are married but find ways not to love each other. Their ten-year relationship is under strain as they explore an alternative life-style in the Saharan desert. Loosened from their New York moorings, both engage in extra-marital sex, but it is casual in both cases. The deep, somewhat hidden, bond between them is revealed during Port's slow death, when Kit cares for him with intense affection.

The Last Emperor There is only one fully-developed relationship of love in the film, that between Pu Yi and Wan Jung, his wife. Although she is slightly older and wiser than he, and although it is an arranged marriage, they grow up together, establish a rapport and enjoy mutual respect. Pu Yi also takes a second wife, Wen Hsiu, who plays second fiddle and eventually leaves the arrangement.

2. Adolescent sexuality

overview One of the prominent themes in Bertolucci's *oeuvre* is sexuality, in its full spectrum of experiences. As Bertolucci himself made clear in an interview our early sexual experiences are the most important to our later character formation: 'I think that sexuality is perhaps the most important thing in a person's life...It's fundamentally important and completely natural.' He was also clear that early sexual experiences are the most formative, and that is why sexual initiation features strongly in three of his later films.

Luna In this film, fifteen-year-old Joe is driven into the arms of a young Italian girl by his loneliness. As they watch a Marilyn Monroe film in a cinema, his (and the girl's) loss of virginity is depicted as a human, somewhat humorous, experience. Joe also has to deal with his own mother's sexualised advances to him. How an adult Joe will process that incestuous experience is left to the viewers to consider.

The Dreamers This film, set almost entirely in an apartment in Paris, explores the sexual education of three teenagers: Mathew (an American exchange student), Theo (a French student) and Isabelle (his twin sister). Mixing their shared love of cinema with politics, the threesome dare themselves to be open about their sexuality. Mathew and Isabelle lose their virginity to each other and before passionate lovers, for a while. Although incest is hinted at in the film, it does not occur.

Stealing Beauty The issue of virginity also appears in this film, in which another young American, Lucy, goes to Europe (Tuscany) to find both her old boyfriend and her father. Lucy's attitudes toward sex and virginity help to define her character. Her encounters with a pair of brothers conclude in a glorious scene when she and the young boy both have their first sexual experience.

The Conformist Another kind of adolescent sexual experience also defines the main character in Bertolucci's masterpiece. When he was a young boy, Marcello is seduced by an older man, and though no sex occurs, he thinks that he shot the man dead. That traumatic experience haunts Marcello for the rest of his life, shrouding him in shame. It is one reason why he wants to 'conform' and marry a middle-class girl in the end.

Last Tango in Paris Jeanne, the young woman in *Last Tango in Paris*, is also subjected to transgressive sexual acts. Although she appears to have a guilt-free attitude toward sex, she is raped and manipulated by the dominant Paul. She also describes her earliest experience of having an orgasm by masturbation, which plays a role in forming her later attitudes.

The Grim Reaper The young people in Bertolucci's debut film are a far cry from those in his later films. The characters in *The Grim Reaper* are gay and innocent, laughing and singing about love and possible futures. Shy and inexperienced, the girls giggle about marriage and the boys dismiss it out of nervousness. 'What do you mean problems?' one of the boys says to the girls. 'You just go to church and get married.'

The Last Emperor When the young Pu Yi gets married, to two wives, he is experienced in any kind of love-making. Slowly, he is taught, in part by Wan Jung, his first wife, and in part by palace courtiers. In one scene, the young man enjoys a frolic under the sheets with both his wives. His sexual education progresses alongside his political education.

3 relationships

. Family

Luna The key to this film is the chaotic relationship between Joe and his mother, Caterina. Lonely and introverted, Joe seeks friendship in drugs and girlfriends. Later, after learning that the man he thought was his father is only a step-father, he seeks his real father. Mother-son and father-son bonds are the twin drivers of the plot.

Stealing Beauty In this film, too, a young person searches for her father. Lucy suspects that he is a man whom her mother knew in Tuscany, where she goes to find him. In the end, Lucy discovers that a sculptor, Ian, is her father, which provides a heartfelt ending to the story.

Me and You In this late film, Bertolucci explores the dynamics of the relationship between step-siblings. The two characters, Lorenzo and Olivia, are designed to be as different as possible: boy and girl, aged 14 and 25, with different mothers. They have different histories and don't remember the

same things about their childhoods, which makes their slowly developing rapport more poignant.

The Sheltering Sky The family relationship explored in this film is a ten-year marriage between Port and Kit, two Americans who decided to leave New York in search of adventure. Although Port and Kit snap at each other, they are sometimes gentle and caring. That is the tragedy of the story: despite their best efforts, they don't seem to know how to love each other.

The Grim Reaper The bleak atmosphere of this early film is expressed in the loneliness of its characters. During the course of all the vignettes, we do not meet a single happily married couple or a harmonious relationship. The prostitute lives alone. Natalino, the murderer, is a loner. The soldier pesters women on the street. Bustelli cheats on his fiancé, who mistreats him anyway. The gay man is by himself. Luciano and his friends spend their time disrupting lovers, and the only pair they encounter argue among themselves about what to do with Luciano when he is caught.

4. Politics

overview A strong theme in Bertolucci's film is politics. He was himself a member of the Communist Party of Italy (like his compatriot Visconti) and some of his films are semi-autobiographical in that they reflect an intellectual's dilemma of having to choose art or political action. Bertolucci acknowledged this tension in an interview when he said, 'I was a Marxist with all the love, all the passion, and all the despair of a bourgeois who chooses Marxism...For every Marxist, there is always the fear of being sucked back into the milieu he came out of, because he's born into it and the roots are so deep.'

Before the Revolution The personal fear of compromising one's political ideals is depicted in *Before the Revolution* (1964), Bertolucci's second film, in which the protagonist, Fabrizio, is a middle-class young man torn (like the director) between his revolutionary ideals and his comfortable life-style. He opts for respectability by abandoning radical politics and marrying his innocent fiancé. There is also a conflict between his bourgeois upbringing and his radical politics, which is resolved when he abandons politics and marries a middle-class girl.

The Conformist Political compromise, is explored in a much more subtle manner in *The Conformist* (1970). Here, the conflicted character is not leftist but fascist by inclination. Like Fabrizio, however, Marcello seeks conventionality by marrying a middle-class woman. Rejecting any trace of unconventional behaviour, he desperately wants to fit in to the prevailing ideology of Mussolini's regime. In fact, Marcello does not actually compromise his political beliefs because he has none; instead, he simply conforms.

The Last Emperor The compromises that accompany political power are writ large in *The Last Emperor* (1987). Pu Yi survives the chaotic changes that convulsed China during the first half of the twentieth century only by adapting himself and adopting different guises as he passes from sovereign of China, to puppet-ruler of Japanese-controlled Manchuria, to prisoner of war held by the Russians and, finally, to a re-educated peasant in Mao's paradise. The film also contains political idealism, for example, the revolution of Sun Yat-sen's nationalists in 1911, the seizure of power by Chiang Kai-shek in 1925 and Mao's Cultural Revolution. All these revolutions are led by political idealism, but there is also another type of idealism in the film: Pu Yi's own romantic idea that he is the ruler of the Manchurian people.

The Dreamers Political idealism is also central to a much later film, *The Dreamers* (2003). Set in the context of the radical politics of 1968 Paris, it features Theo, a student in a middle-class family, who is bursting with Maoist ideology (and cinephilia, too). For most of the film, however, he prefers to stay indoors rather than fight on the streets. In the final scene, his visions of experimental cinema and radical politics merge when he joins the protestors and throws a Molotov cocktail at the police.

5. Society

Culture

The Sheltering Sky The theme of culture, and especially culture clash, is at the heart of this film, which follows the adventures of two Americans who travel to the Sahara. As outsiders, Port and Kit sample bits of local culture (the Tuareg tribe) but are unable to enter inside. The problem seems to be their cultural 'baggage', especially their reliance on words and writing. Both Port and Kit do eventually merge with local culture, but neither experience is positive

The Last Emperor Another kind of culture clash is depicted in this epic film about the history of China in the twentieth century. As the Middle Kingdom is convulsed with revolution, it also advances along the road of westernisation. Pu Yi is taught by a Scotsman, learns English, wear glasses and, when he takes up residence in Tientsin, adopts the playboy life-style of the Roaring Twenties. The film includes small details, such as Pu Yi's habit of chewing gum, riding a bicycle and playing tennis, as well as major changes, such as the fact that Pu Yi's second wife leaves him because 'western society does not tolerate two wives.'

6. Truth vs Appearance

The Last Emperor At the heart of this complex epic story is the search for historical truth, the attempt to disentangle truth from memory, prejudice and political ideology. Everyone seeks it, and views it from their own perspective, whether ideological or personal. But no one seems to know what it is, not even the director, who wisely did not assume an omniscient point of view in telling the story. A good example is Pu Yi's re-education in a prison. The Communist prison governor makes a speech, in which he says, 'The only way to change is to discover the truth and look at it in the face.' The re-education programme includes new history books, documentary film, interrogations, summoning witnesses and, most important, the prisoners writing their own biographies.

Before the Revolution A similar conflict between official ideology, of the Communist Party, and social reality is a theme in *Before the Revolution*. Fabrizio is an enthusiastic consumer of the party's slogans and doctrines, but they do not help him navigate the dilemmas he meets in his personal life. As a result, he abandons the party and returns to his bourgeois upbringing.

CHARACTERS

1. Open

Anna (*The Conformist*) is young, beautiful and brave. Married to Professor Qadri, she works as a ballet school instructor and has firm anti-fascist convictions. She is as sharp as she is lovely. Protective of her naïve husband, she is quick to sense danger. She is also open to sexual relations with both men and women.

Isabelle (*The Dreamers*) is both playful and sultry, sweet-natured and cold-hearted. At her core, she is only part herself, the other half being her brother, Théo. After losing her virginity to Mathew, she enters a new dynamic, loving both Mathew and her brother. She is enigmatic, switching from affectionate lover to sharp-tongued sister of a friend. She is wilful and free-spirited, but not quite as free as she thinks.

Wan Jung (*The Last Emperor*) is seventeen when she is chosen as the right bride for Pu Yi. From the beginning, she shows more maturity and self-control than her husband, whom she grows to respect. Wan Jung is fiercely loyal to China, despite its treatment of Pu Yi, which causes a rift between her and her husband. Her growing isolation from him leads her into a lesbian relationship with Eastern Jewel and opium smoking. In the end, though, she proves her loyalty to Pu Yi.

Jeanne (*Last Tango in Paris*) is young, perhaps nineteen or twenty years old. She is an unremarkable but spirited person born into a bourgeois family. She has a blasé attitude to life, something of a reflection of the 'pop' culture of the 1970s. She is mostly dominated by Paul, but asserts herself with Thomas, her fiancé. She could be viewed as the middle-class victim of the social-rebel Paul, but that characterisation ignores her agency in the sex scenes.

Kit (*The Sheltering Sky*) is an American playwright, seeking to experience a different kind of life. She is sharp-tongued, mostly with Port, but also considerate to him and others. She appears edgy and restless from the beginning, trying to accommodate her husband's vague plans with her own vague desires. Although she has a one-night fling with George, her bond with Port is deep, perhaps too deep.

Lucy (*Stealing Beauty*) is a young American woman on the cusp of womanhood. She is attractive, even sexy, but also childlike and physically awkward at the same time. She is candid yet shy, afraid of who she might be. She's also curious, seeking not only her father but also her identity. And she is sensitive, captivated by a four-year-old love letter, and responsive to beauty in poetry, art and the landscape.

Ian (*Stealing Beauty*) has a chiselled face, much like one of his wood images, which makes him look older than he is. Often, he stares with cold concentration at his model or his sculpture. But he is also a warm and affectionate man, with no apparent agenda, sexual or otherwise, except for his work. And he works long and hard in his studio, never allowing his model to see the image until it is finished.

The unnamed prostitute (*The Grim Reaper*) is a congenial woman in her thirties or forties. Rather than being a sexualised character, she is shown as an ordinary person—just doing her job in order to make ends meet. In her only appearance, in the second vignette of Natalino, she shows her vulnerability. She is professional but also personable, telling Natalino that he has a 'lovely accent from the North' and that she 'likes him.'

Luciano Although nineteen-year-old Luciano (*The Grim Reaper*) is poor and fatherless, he is a positive and light-hearted person. When his friends in the purse-snatching gang get angry and frustrated, he maintains his cheerfulness.

Theodore (*The Grim Reaper*) the demobbed soldier from the south is also a carefree character. In his episode, he wanders around Rome making passes at young women. He is idle and lonely, but essentially free of worries.

Francolicchio is yet another open character in *The Grim Reaper*. He is a young boy, maybe fifteen or sixteen, who has close friendships with other boys and girls his age. Although he comes from a poor family, he has a sunny disposition.

2. Closed

Marcello (*The Conformist*) is the epitome of a closed character. Desperate to conform, he is a dull man, a bureaucrat who rarely smiles and who is afraid to stand out from the crowd. He seeks anonymity in following social conventions and the prevailing political ideology. He lacks both courage and conviction, in all aspects of life, including his love life. His sexual desire for his wife is voyeuristic and his interest in Anna is momentary.

Lorenzo (*Me and You*) is a very different kind of closed person. He is young loner and slightly autistic. He shuns people and delves into the natural world of reptiles and insects. Shy and fragile, he is also kind and affectionate, though that does not prevent him from throwing a teenage tantrum. He has a keen imagination and would like nothing more than to live in isolation from the messy world outside his private self.

Joe (*Luna*) is similar to Joe. He, too, is a moody teenage boy, whose busy mother does not have enough time for him. He can be sweet but also rude, self-centred and yet generous. In short, he is as contradictory and erratic as his mother. But being only fifteen, the adult worlds of love and sex are confusing and hurtful for him.

Port (*The Sheltering Sky*) is an enigma, who talks a lot but shows little self-awareness. An American man in his thirties, and a composer from New York, he is self-assured, smug and pretentious. Not unkind, he is reflective but also seems paralyzed by a deep dissatisfaction with himself and with society in general.

The unnamed gay man in *The Grim Reaper* is the dark shadow in the film. He meets the two boys Pipito and Francolicchio in the dark park and tries to lure one (or both) of them into a sexual encounter. Next, he is the silent witness to the murder of the prostitute. And, finally, he leads the police to Natalino, the murderer, who is dancing with other couples on a barge. The key feature of this gay man is his silence—he is the only character in the film who never speaks. He is, as some critics have suggested, the Grim Reaper itself, the silent figure in western mythologies who comes to collect your soul and take it to the land of the dead.

3. Disagreeable

Miranda (*Stealing Beauty*) is very easy to dislike. Shallow, catty and stuck-up, she thinks she is a wonderful jewellery designer, who has bestowed her presence on the others at the villa. Bringing her hunky boyfriend with her, she enjoys nude sunbathing and heavy-duty sex. When Lucy arrives, she is jealous and loses her sangfroid.

Paul (*Last Tango in Paris*) is a bully, who manipulates and rapes Jeanne. Although he has travelled the world before settling in Paris, we know little about his recent past. He had an unhappy upbringing,

with irresponsible parents, although he has pleasant memories of the countryside. Paul is a moody and withdrawn person, psychically crippled by his wife's suicide. He can be both violent and tender, angry and playful, and his mood swings are unpredictable and sudden.

Bustelli (*The Grim Reaper*) is a man of appearances only. He wears expensive clothes and drives a shiny car. All his assets, we later learn, are funded by his fiancé's income from running a network of prostitutes. He is her 'associate,' but he is under her control. Empty inside, he shows disdain toward others on the outside.

Esperia (*The Grim Reaper*) is Bustelli's fiancé and partner in crime. She is a shallow, domineering and spiteful woman, who threatens to kill her own mother, bullies her prostitutes and only smiles when she is counting money.

Natalino (*The Grim Reaper*) is a deceptively nice-looking blonde man who is also a loner. He stands out from the crowd by virtue of his accent and his dress. This soulless man shows no compunction in murdering a prostitute for her handbag.

4. Conscientious

Pu Yi Given his upbringing, Pu Yi (*The Last Emperor*) has flaws, but he is essentially an admirable man. Aided by his western tutor, he develops his own sense of what is right for China and Manchuria. Although he makes mistakes, he is guided by what he thinks is best for his people. In the end, he also shows compassion toward the man who held him in prison for ten long years.

Prison commander Pu Yi is matched in virtue by his prison commander (*The Last Emperor*). The prison commander is a dour man, a person of firm conviction that people are basically good and can be re-educated to bring out their innate nature. For a commander of a prison in China in the 1950s, he is extremely kind toward his wards, never showing anger or violence. At the end, we also witness his iron-hard determination not to compromise himself and confess to crimes.

Alex (*Stealing Beauty*) is a frail man, whose pale face displays his slow decline to death. Despite that condition, he is a proud person who does not want to be fussed over. And he is deeply sympathetic, especially toward Lucy, whose youth infuses him with a burst of life. In this relationship with her, he displays empathy, vulnerability and the capacity for love.

Mathew With his wide-eyed American eagerness and innocence, Mathew (*The Dreamers*) could be a character out of a Henry James novel. Certainly, he begins as his mother's son, writing home nice letters about his experiences in Paris, but as the film develops, we see that he has hidden depths. At various times, he behaves like a thumb-sucking baby, an immature teenager, an imaginative student and a perceptive adult. Overall, he is sweet, vulnerable and probably the most likeable of the threesome.

5. Rational

Cesare (*Before the Revolution*) is the iconic ideologue, who is completely committed to the cause. He is a teacher, who has a large influence on Fabrizio and others. Although he is dedicated to his revolutionary ideology, he is also gentle and thoughtful. His character reflects the contradictions that the film-maker perceived in the leftist movement of his own youth.

Qadri (*The Conformist*) is similar to Cesare in his political commitment, rational outlook and general demeanour. He, too, is a teacher, who wins the admiration of his student/followers. And, he is also congenial and polite, if a little naïve.

Théo Dark-haired and frowning, Théo (*The Dreamers*) is another serious-minded political thinker. Unlike the others, though, he is young and more interested in cinema than activism on the streets. He is amiable toward Mathew, and the two young men share a certain camaraderie, until Mathew begins to claim ownership of Isabelle. Then, the cold, even cruel, side of his character is revealed

Mr Johnston (*The Last Emperor*) is the personification of western rationalism. As Pu Yi's tutor, he guides the young ruler away from 'irrational Asian' culture toward a modern outlook on the world. He carries himself ramrod straight and plays a 'straight bat' with his young charge, while also not fearing to stand up for his beliefs when they clash with palace tradition. Slowly, he develops a deep friendship with Pu Yi and defends him whenever possible.

6. Emotional

Fabrizio (*Before the Revolution*) is a thinly-disguised version of the film-maker, who, like his protagonist, had an unsuccessful relationship with an older woman and supported the Communist cause. Fabrizio is a rebel, ranting against the Church, Fascism and the state, but underneath his shouting, he takes more pleasure in watching films than in political activism. As the film unfolds, we understand that Fabrizio has channelled his revolutionary urge into his daring love affair with his aunt. In all the political and romantic turmoil, he is naïve but always considerate.

Caterina (*Luna*) is a popular and dedicated opera singer. She is as self-absorbed, vain and melodramatic as the roles she plays on the lavish sets. One might (somewhat unkindly) call her a 'drama queen.' She is also neglectful and then remorseful as a mother of a wayward son. Once she becomes aware of his desperate condition, she clings to him as she would to a lover.

Gina (*Before the Revolution*) is something of an older female version of Fabrizio, her nephew. An attractive woman, perhaps in her thirties, she does 'nothing' in Milan, except 'take a bath three times a day.' She is deeply disturbed and prone to bouts of hysteria, apparently stemming from the early death of her father. She is mercurial, oscillating between happiness and depression within minutes. Louche, lost and adrift, and mentally unstable, she does show wisdom in the end when she guides Fabrizio back to his fiancé.

Guilia (*The Conformist*) is a young, middle-class woman of little intellect, just the normal sort of wife that Marcello wants. She is likable and lively but somewhat shallow, naïve and spoiled. She wants to get married and enjoy life, in that order. Unlike the other characters in the story, she is guided more by her heart than her head.

Olivia (*Me and You*) is Lorenzo's older half-sister. At twenty-five, she is already a failure. She is aggressive, jittery and unreliable, but she is also playful, intelligent and supportive of her naïve step-brother. Her early promise as an art photographer was destroyed by a heroin addiction that still haunts her. Although she shows some flashes of good sense, she is ruled by emotions.



(The director as a young man)



(The older man, in the same pose)