

The Conformist Arrow Films Blu-ray and DVD Commentary David Forgacs © 2011

TCR IN	Sequence	Commentary
10:00.01	Paris INT: hotel	<p>[00:01] <i>The Conformist</i> was financed by Paramount Pictures, operating in Italy through a company called Mars Film.</p> <p>[00:10] Bernardo Bertolucci was only 28 when he wrote and directed it but he had already made three feature films and he had another one, <i>The Spider's Stratagem</i>, in postproduction. Still, this was a new departure for him. It had a larger budget, 600 million lire, just under a million US dollars, and unlike his earlier films, which one could describe as both experimental and independent, it was made for a mainstream studio for international distribution. Bertolucci's screenplay adapted a novel by Alberto Moravia. I'll say more about this adaptation later but let's look now at this opening credits sequence.</p> <p>[00:44] We see the main character, Marcello Clerici, played by the French actor Jean-Louis Trintignant, fully dressed on a hotel bed. The pulsing red light is coming, ostensibly, from a neon sign for the French Communist film <i>La Vie est à nous</i>, made by Jean Renoir and others in 1936. This situates us approximately in time as well as in place: in fact it's 1938 and Marcello is in Paris. But it also establishes a level of cinematic memory, and the pulsing light sets in motion a central visual motif of the film: the opposition of light and shadow.</p> <p>[01:14] As in most Italian films with foreign actors their voices are dubbed by Italians. Trintignant was dubbed in this film by Sergio Graziosi. The two other French actors, Pierre Clémenti and Dominique Sanda, were also dubbed.</p> <p>[01:25] The credits sequence also gets the thriller narrative started. Marcello answers the phone in a whisper and arranges to meet the person who has just called him. Day is now starting to dawn and the camera pulls back and at the end of this long take, after Marcello has gone to get his pistol, it will go up to reveal Giulia, his wife, lying naked face down on the bed.</p> <p>[01:46] <i>The Conformist</i> is among other things an extraordinary exercise in style. The core creative team, alongside Bertolucci, consisted of the art director Ferdinando Scarfiotti, the costume designer Gitt Magrini and the costume makers Tirelli, the editor Franco Arcalli, known as Kim, the composer of the original score, Georges Delerue, and the director of photography Vittorio Storaro.</p> <p>[02:18] Considering that it was made in a relatively short time – screenplay written in one month, shooting autumn-winter 1969-70, postproduction completed by June 1970 – the film is remarkable for its carefully planned and executed look.</p>
10:02:53	Paris EXT: Gare d'Orsay and streets	<p>[02:54] We're now outside the hotel on the side of the Gare d'Orsay on the Left Bank in Paris. The story is going to move between different time levels and different places but the basic narrative frame is the journey that Marcello is about to take, in the car driven by the Fascist secret service agent Manganiello, along the route on which Professor Quadri and his wife Anna are driving to their house in the French Alps. This frame narrative starts with shots through a blue filter, which marks it</p>

		<p>off visually and also suggests a winter scene.</p> <p>[03:24] During the journey Marcello slips in and out of memories. Just look at how this is done. The first flashback, which is about to come up, will be introduced not by a visual dissolve but by a long sound bridge, in which we start to hear the foxtrot sung by the girl trio in the radio studio. It's as if we the viewers are slowly slipping along with Marcello through a very thin membrane of memory into another time and place, which we will then drop into on a cut. [STOP AT 03:46]</p>
10:03:56	Rome INT: EIAR studio (studio shots)	<p>[03:56] And when we get into this other time and place, we are behind Marcello seeing him watching what looks like a widescreen film image, a screen within our screen,</p> <p>[04:06] but actually it's a window onto yet another place: another room. A number of things are going on here. On the literal level it's simply Marcello watching the singing trio. But the shot links up with a series of images in the film of Marcello looking at screens or through curtains, and also with the scene about the allegory of Plato's cave, which is about watching shadows of things, like cinema.</p> <p>[04:30] And it's also about Bertolucci's own cinephilia, his love affair with French and American movies of the 1930s and early 40s, which is evident in the film's visual reconstruction of that era. He said in 1972: "In [<i>The Spider's Stratagem</i>] I was influenced by life while in <i>The Conformist</i> I was more influenced by movies. One could say the point of departure was cinema, and the cinema I like is Sternberg, Ophuls and Welles."</p> <p>[04:55] <i>The Conformist</i> doesn't present a historically correct view of the late 30s/early 40s, or of Fascism, and it doesn't aim to do this. What it does give us are two different takes on that period.</p> <p>[05:05] One is this cinephile's reconstruction, which <i>is</i> a reconstruction – a fake, a fantasy – suffused with the filmmaker's nostalgia for the beauty of that era. As Scarfiotti put it, he and Bertolucci were trying to create "an abstract Fascist Italy, a long way from a documentary version".</p> <p>[05:22] The other take is a <i>critical evocation</i> of the Fascist period, and of a certain kind of anti-fascism, from the standpoint of a leftwing filmmaker looking back on it in 1969-70.</p> <p>[05:33] One needs to remember that <i>The Conformist</i> was made while the political upheavals in Europe of the late 60s were still going on – there had been the French May 68, the student protests in Italy. The film went into production during the wave of factory strikes and demonstrations in Italy known as the "hot autumn" of 1969.</p> <p>[05:53] Fascism, for the generation that had grown up after World War Two – Bertolucci was born in 1941 – had been repressed from collective memory. Susan Sontag wrote an essay in 1974 called "Fascinating Fascism" in which she said:</p>

		<p>“For those born after the early 1940s, bludgeoned by a lifetime’s palaver, pro and con, about communism, it’s fascism – the great conversation piece of their parents’ generation – which represents the exotic, the unknown.”</p> <p>[06:19] If we translate this into the terms of <i>Italian</i> history, what it means also is that the postwar generation had become impatient with the account of <i>anti-fascism</i> and the Resistance that they had grown up listening to and which had been put forward in some classic neorealist films: the myth of the Italian people coming out united in 1943-45 to defend Italy against the occupying German army and the brutal remnants of Fascism. Bertolucci wants to remind us that many ordinary Italians had supported Fascism and that Fascist Italy had been an ally of Nazi Germany since the 30s and had had a real ideological alignment with it. His generation in the 60s had rediscovered a more critical, Marxist, class-based interpretation of Fascism. Fascism was an emanation of capitalism. As such Fascism was closely meshed with bourgeois society, and with everything that was elegant, refined and stylish about it, and capitalism and bourgeois society would continue to thrive after Fascism fell under a new form of state.</p>
10:07:29	Rome INT: EIAR studio:	<p>[07:17] The colonel who has just appeared, as if in Marcello’s dream, has checked out his credentials for performing a mission on behalf of the Fascist state. The actor is hardly recognizable here but he is in fact Fosco Giachetti, who had been a major Italian screen idol of the Fascist period, and was one of several movie stars from the past that Bertolucci chose to cast in this film.</p>
10:07:37	Rome INT: Cutaway to ministry at EUR then back to EIAR studio	<p>[07:38] As the colonel tells Marcello what he has to do, we get an anticipation of him arriving at the ministry. This is the first of a series of shots taken inside the Palazzo dei Congressi, one of the buildings in the area of Rome known originally as E42. This was a new district planned under Fascism for the 1942 Expo that was cancelled because of the war, and was later called [pronounce in Italian] EUR or [spell out] E.U.R.: Esposizione Universale Roma.</p> <p>[08:04] Although the actual Fascist ministries weren’t located in these buildings, Bertolucci, and Scarfiotti, who was also born in 1941, chose them as sets because they epitomized, in their imagination and fantasy, quintessential Fascist monumental architecture.</p> <p>[08:21] The interior sets in E.U.R. are good examples of how cinematic memory and historical reference worked together in the production design of the film. The desks in large empty rooms, the shadows and echoing footsteps are reminiscent of the Thatcher Memorial Library in Welles’s <i>Citizen Kane</i>, one of the films that Bertolucci showed Storaro when they started to work together on <i>The Conformist</i>.</p>
10:08:36	Rome INT: Ministry at EUR	<p>[08:44] After these very carefully composed and lit shots inside the ministry there’s a first piece of voyeurism coming up, as Marcello looks through a gap in the curtain and sees a young woman being embraced by the minister.</p> <p>[08:55] The actor who turns to camera here is Dominique Sanda, who plays Anna, the wife of Professor Quadri, who lives in Paris... but here we’re still in Rome. In case viewers are confused, let me quote what Bertolucci himself said about Marcello’s behaviour towards Anna when he meets her later for the first time in Paris: “I wanted the viewer ..., like Marcello,</p>

		to have the feeling that this woman has been seen before, in some way. It's [as if] Marcello had a fantasy about a woman, about a face, about a body; so you see Dominique Sanda before once for a second in Rome, in the Fascist ministry, and then again in the brothel [in Ventimiglia]. I didn't want to underline too much, to make it heavy, that this was a kind of ideal woman for Marcello; I wanted it to be kind of a mystery."
10:09:44	Car and Rome EXT: Ara Pacis wall	[09:42] This scene is ending and we're about to go into an interesting piece of intercutting where shots of the car journey through Paris are interrupted by three short memory shots of Marcello by another Fascist monument: the wall outside the Ara Pacis in Rome, erected in 1938, with a replica Latin inscription. Scarfiotti had a 2-metre high platform built so that Trintignant could walk with this massive wall right behind him. The Latin tag he recites is the poem attributed to the Emperor Hadrian contemplating his own death: "Little wandering pale soul, guest and companion of my body".
10:10:26	Rome INT: Giulia's apartment	<p>[10:19] Marcello is paying a visit to his fiancée, Giulia, who lives with her mother.</p> <p>[10:25] This is a good point at which to begin to talk about the contribution of Vittorio Storaro to this film. Storaro had been Bertolucci's director of photography on <i>The Spider's Stratagem</i> and he was DP on six more of his films afterwards. Francis Ford Coppola was so impressed by Storaro's work on <i>The Conformist</i> that he imitated various shots, as well as the general look of the film, in <i>The Godfather</i> films and he then hired Storaro to work as DP on <i>Apocalypse Now</i>, for which Storaro won his first Oscar.</p> <p>[11:00] Storaro has talked about the way he lit this sequence in Giulia's apartment, with these zebra stripe shadows from Venetian blinds picked up in Giulia's dress. He said "I wanted to show through light the idea of claustrophobia, of being caged. I used the idea that the light could never reach the shadows. [...]. That's why I was using the kind of technique to give very sharp shadows and very sharp light in the first half of the picture."</p> <p>[11:30] Giulia is played by Stefania Sandrelli, who had become an instant star in Italy at age 15 when she acted the young cousin and object of desire of Marcello Mastroianni's character in <i>Divorce Italian Style</i>. She had already worked with Bertolucci in his film <i>Partner</i>, made in 1968, and she was 24 when she acted in <i>The Conformist</i>.</p> <p>[11:52] Sandrelli is very skilful at creating a plausible character within the stylized manner in which Bertolucci directs her in this picture, speaking in falsetto pitch and exuding both innocence and girlish sensuality.</p> <p>[12:02] There's a piece of carefully worked out mise-en-scène here, where Giulia's mother appears on the right and then retreats. We'll see exactly the same framing at the end of the film when we return to this apartment. Not quite</p> <p>[12:22] Trintignant is also very skilful in playing opposite Sandrelli. He captures brilliantly the sexual restraint, the guarded behaviour of this character. Moravia's novel describes this scene: "Marcello wasn't in love with Giulia but he liked these sensual embraces which never failed to disturb him. And yet he didn't feel inclined to requite her transports of desire. He</p>

		<p>wanted his relations with his fiancée to remain within traditional limits, as if a greater intimacy would reintroduce into his life that disorder and abnormality that he was always trying to exclude from it.”</p> <p>[13:00] This whole sequence in Giulia’s apartment has the air of a pastiche. Starting with the gag of Marcello first giving the flowers to the maid, and then to Giulia, who then gives them to the maid, and then with the false entrance and exit of the mother, and all the overacting, it evokes a drawing-room comedy. In particular it evokes what had become known in Italy as the “white telephone” films of the late 30s and early 40s, that is to say comedies based on amorous entanglements set in bourgeois family houses.</p> <p>[13:30] This is another actor whom it’s difficult to recognize but who was also well-known to Italian audiences as a younger woman. It’s Yvonne Sanson, who starred in Raffaello Matarazzo’s melodramas of the early 50s, opposite Amedeo Nazzari, who had been another male heartthrob of the Fascist cinema.</p> <p>[13:51] This is where the mother announces that an anonymous letter has arrived, which Giulia grabs and reads aloud, saying that Marcello’s father is in an asylum with a madness of “syphilitic origin” – Giulia stumbles over the word “syphilitic”. Watch the relay of looks here and look at Trintignant’s wonderful silent acting, restrained but highly communicative.</p> <p>[PAUSE]</p> <p>[14:46] The humour here turns on the mother’s effusive defence of Marcello, such a fine catch as a son-in-law, his own remark about Giulia having had profoundly moral illnesses and then the gag of the maid, who is not supposed to be listening, overhearing everything as she eats the leftover spaghetti.</p>
10:15:14	Rome EXT: M and Manganiello in street	<p>[15:14] There’s a series of canted shots now, or “Dutch tilts” as they’re also known, as Marcello walks in Rome to his mother’s house, stalked by Manganiello in his car. This is another overt stylistic quotation of 1930s and early 40s films. There are canted shots from <i>Frankenstein</i>, 1931, through to <i>The Maltese Falcon</i>, 1941.</p> <p>[15:44] But it’s also striking that Bertolucci and Storaro break the rule now by maintaining a fixed position on this last canted shot, holding it throughout the dialogue by the gate between the two characters, and the camera just dollies back to get them both in frame. The shot levels up only right at the end.</p>
10:16:25	Rome EXT: M’s mother’s house, cut to car journey	<p>[16:22] This house in Rome, in Via Pinciana, is no longer there, and in fact it looks ripe for demolition. Manganiello says it seems like a dungheap. It suitably suggests the decadent world of Marcello’s mother, who has taken her young Japanese driver, Alberi, as a lover.</p> <p>[16:40] This is a key piece of frame narrative, where we learn for the first time that the purpose of this journey for Marcello is, as he puts it, to “save her”. First-time viewers of the film don’t yet know who “she” is, but of course he’s talking about</p>

		Anna Quadri.
10:17:12	Rome INT: M's mother's house	<p>[17:13] Marcello's mother is played by Milly, another well-known Italian actor from the 30s. Her real name was Carla Mignone. She was also a singer. She was in her mid 60s when she worked on <i>The Conformist</i>.</p> <p>[17:27] Marcello takes off his gloves, which suggest fastidiousness, but he keep his hat on, in other words he keeps one layer of protection from things around him. He also has his hat on later in the scene in the hotel when he phones Quadri.</p> <p>[17:48] This scene shows the skills of Ferdinando Scarfiotti and Gitt Magrini in using set and costume to create character. Marcello is buttoned-up whereas his mother is spilling open: he finds her in a silk nightdress pulled up to her thighs and he covers her up. Her frilly top slips off one shoulder.</p> <p>[18:07] Marcello is already behaving like a spy. He discovers a syringe under the bed and works out that the morphine is being provided by Alberi.</p> <p>[18:24] Milly is also very skilful at creating this cameo role, swinging her arms to suggest existential weariness.</p>
10:18:53	Rome EXT: M's mother's house	<p>[18:53] Manganiello is a caricatural name for this Fascist lackey, who in Moravia's novel is called simply Orlando. A manganello was the name of the stick that the Fascist squads used to beat up their political enemies. The actor is Gastone Moschin. He often played in comedy but with his sturdy build he was also a convincing heavy and Coppola cast him as Fanucci, the Black Hand boss in New York in <i>The Godfather Part II</i> who is the first victim of the young Vito Corleone. Manganiello is assigned to assist Marcello and to take orders from him but there's also a power play between them. It is Manganiello who tells Marcello what his orders are from above, but Marcello at first asserts his authority over Manganiello by being more cultured and by playing the better fascist. He tells him fatherland comes before family and corrects him by reminding him to call him "camerata" (Fascist comrade) rather than using the deferential forms (signorsì, dottore) traditionally considered polite in Italian but which for hardline Fascists had decadent bourgeois associations.</p> <p>[20:02] The scenes outside the mother's house are filmed with a mobile camera. Bertolucci displays here his love for creating complex mise-en-scène, something he derived from his cinematic masters, Renoir and Ophuls.</p> <p>[20:18] First we have the two characters talking about a third character, Alberi, who stands framed between them and slightly out of focus;</p> <p>... [20:35] then, as the dialogue ends, the camera will follow Marcello moving first towards the car and then away from it as Manganiello starts to beat up Alberi.</p> <p>[20:53] This little dash by Trintignant with his hands clasped behind his back says everything about his character's physical</p>

		<p>coldness and detached sadism, his keeping a distance from violence.</p> <p>[21:07] This is continued as he kicks Alberi's cap under the car.</p> <p>[21:38] This low dolly and crane shot of dry leaves, which Coppola imitated in <i>Godfather 2</i>, corresponds to a description in Moravia's novel, but there it is in a scene of Marcello's childhood. One expects there to have been a cut in time and place but in fact Marcello and his mother have remained in the same place...</p>
10:21:54	Rome EXT: Manicomio	<p>[21:54] ... and it is <i>now</i> that there is the scene change.</p> <p>[22:06] This surreal place, with the wind howling and everything white-grey all around, is the asylum where Marcello's mad father is held. In fact it's another real place: it's the outside of the Palazzo dei Congressi, one of the buildings used for the earlier shots of the ministry. It was designed by Adalberto Libera and built between 1938 and 1943.</p> <p>[22:32] Giuseppe Addobbati, who plays Marcello's father, is another actor whose career had started in the Fascist period. One of his major roles was in the war film <i>Alfa Tau</i>. But he had continued to work since then. In the 60s he'd been in a string of spaghetti westerns with the stage name John Douglas, or John McDouglas.</p> <p>[22:50] This scene establishes that Marcello's father was formerly a member of a Fascist squad, who carried out violent acts against anti-fascists. Yet the words he is reading aloud when they first see him seem liberal and antifascist: "if the state is not modelled on the individual how can the individual be modelled on the state?".</p> <p>[23:10] But then Marcello provokes him, wants to make him admit that when he, Marcello, was a child and his father was still sane, he beat people up, made them drink castor oil and also tortured and killed them. He says it's important for him to know this. The implication is that he needs to have a precedent in the family for what he's about to do, namely spy on an antifascist on behalf of the state, and also that he wants to displace responsibility for his actions onto someone else: here, his father.</p>
23:55	Car	<p>[23:35] There's another key bit of dialogue coming up here. Manganiello will tell Marcello that even if they do catch up with the Quadris' car they can't save Anna, because they can't leave witnesses. This is going to prompt Marcello to tell him to stop the car, after having told him before to speed up. Marcello now wants out. [PAUSE OVER MOSCHIN'S SPEECH]</p>
10:24.31	Car/young M and Lino	<p>[24:31] Another temporal layer is about to open up in the narrative structure of the film. From the near black and white of the snowy landscape there's a cut [PAUSE] to an avenue dappled with sunlight in which the young Marcello is being followed by another car. There are matching gestures and words in the two time levels.</p> <p>[24:58] The cut back to Marcello's face again establishes this as cued by his memory. The young Marcello is being "debugged" and presumably having his genitals inspected by the other boys to see if he is "normal". In Moravia's novel his</p>

		<p>schoolmates call him by a girl's name, Marcellina, and put a skirt on him. There is also a lot more detail in the novel about why Marcello lets the chauffeur, Lino, pick him up. Moravia's Marcello is fascinated by guns and by the idea of killing living creatures and Lino offers him a real gun if he will go with him. Marcello doesn't really understand what Lino is after but he plays along because he wants the gun. All this information is stripped away in Bertolucci's film and we just have a series of shots... [25:40] first of Marcello watching his schoolmates as they follow the car on their rollerskates, [25:48] then of some dialogue in the car: Lino, played by the French actor Pierre Clémenti, speaks Sicilian, [25:57] and then of Lino parking the car on a hill: this is shot outside a villa above Trastevere in Rome.</p>
10:26:06	Confession, intercut with young M and Lino	<p>[26:06] But from this flashback within a flashback there is now a jump forward again to Marcello confessing in church before his wedding. In the confession he tells the priest that he killed someone when he was thirteen.</p> <p>[26:21] The confession follows the dialogue in Moravia's novel quite closely, but it is also here that we can see how much the <i>structure</i> of Bertolucci's film deviates from that of the novel. In fact, Bertolucci says that he hadn't even read the novel when he pitched the film to Luigi Luraschi at Paramount Italy. Mapi Maino, who was Bertolucci's partner at the time, had read it, she told Bertolucci the story and he in turn told it to Luraschi. Luraschi liked it, Paramount greenlighted the project in September 1969, and at that point Bertolucci finally read the novel and wrote the screenplay.</p> <p>[27:00] The novel tells Marcello's life story in chronological order, starting with a long prologue set in his childhood, which culminates with his being picked up by Lino, who locks him in his bedroom and shows him the pistol he covets so much. Moravia takes a lot of trouble to establish Marcello's inner motivation. He is a boy who feels himself to be different from the others, with a deviant craving for violence. He enjoys killing lizards and he accidentally kills a cat with a slingshot. This causes him anxiety. After he shoots Lino, again more or less accidentally, and leaves him for dead the story then jumps forward 17 years to find the adult Marcello seeking to conform, to blend in with everyone else, to make up for his deviant past. And conforming in the mid 1930s means becoming a good Fascist.</p> <p>[27:52] Bertolucci's film abandons this chronological narrative and retells the story using the car journey from Paris as its narrative frame. In doing so it condenses the part dealing with Marcello's childhood into a relatively short flashback. But it also changes the story in a more radical way. Moravia's novel is essentially a psychological study of how Marcello comes to grow up to become a certain kind of adult, as well as being a rather mechanical social satire on bourgeois conformism. Bertolucci's film works in the other direction, going from the present to the past, as in psychoanalysis, into repressed and submerged memory. As Francesco Casetti put it in his book on Bertolucci, the film is made up not of successions but of layers.</p> <p>[28:40] Here the collaboration of Kim Arcalli as editor was crucial. This is what Bertolucci said in an interview in 1981, three years after Arcalli had died prematurely at age 49: "I shot <i>The Conformist</i> in a manner that would allow me to tell the story in chronological order, just like the book. But already during shooting I was fascinated by the possibility of considering the car</p>

		<p>journey the 'present' of the film, the framing device. That would allow me to suggest that the protagonist also <i>trave/s</i> through memory. For that reason I shot a great deal of material around Trintignant's journey. [...] I had always previously conceived of editing as a horizontal process. [...] But with Kim it was as if it all came out of thin air, more often than not in a vertical fashion, so that with each new strip another layer would be revealed."</p> <p>[29:46] Even this memory sequence has a fantasy or dream quality about it. The interior of the house, shot at Villa Celimontana, has white flapping sheets hanging from the ceiling. And after the young Marcello shoots Lino, he crouches in the corner, trapped in the locked room, but a window is magically blown open, allowing him to escape, past more white sheets.</p> <p>[30:14] Some of the articles written about <i>The Conformist</i> interpret the scenes with the young Marcello and Lino as the psychological key to the film, claiming that they show that Marcello is really a repressed homosexual who becomes a conformist and marries a lower-middle class woman in order to overcome his fear of deviance. But this is not really spelt out in the film, and on the contrary Bertolucci takes pains to make these flashbacks enigmatic and elliptical, cutting out, as I have said, all the rather heavy psychological baggage that weighs down Moravia's text.</p> <p>[30:50] Moravia's novel was written in 1949 and published in 1951. At that time there were a number of influential psychological theories around that did link the rise of Fascism and the "Fascist personality" to sexual repression or to the fear of being different. They included Wilhelm Reich's <i>Mass Psychology of Fascism</i>, first published in 1933, and Erich Fromm's <i>The Fear of Freedom</i>, 1942. Moravia's novel also had a partial source in Jean-Paul Sartre's story of 1939 <i>L'Enfance d'un chef</i> – "The Childhood of a Leader" – where a young boy has a feminine appearance, is fascinated by a pistol, gets seduced by an older paedophile and then joins a Fascist youth organization and kills a Jewish man who is reading a Communist newspaper. But the existence of these antecedents for <i>Moravia</i> in 1949 doesn't mean that <i>Bertolucci</i> in 1969 buys into Moravia's account of psychic destiny or of a link between fascism and repressed homosexual desire. He seems to be more interested in exploring the <i>symptoms</i> of sexual ambivalence than in giving an account of its <i>causes</i>.</p> <p>[31:50] The dialogue in the confession, as I said, follows the novel quite closely, but it's interesting that in Bertolucci's script Marcello says out loud a couple of things that Moravia's character just thinks but keeps to himself. One is when he tells the priest that he is not a subversive but belongs to an organization that hunts down subversives. After this the priest says in Latin "I absolve you of your sins". Just as Bertolucci wants to remind us of the Mussolini's alliance with Hitler he also wants us to remember the pro-Fascist role of the Catholic Church in the 30s. In 1929 it had signed a pact with the Fascist state and it supported its foreign policies when it presented these as a crusade against Communism, for instance when it supported General Franco in the Spanish Civil War or invaded Soviet Russia alongside Nazi Germany.</p>
10:32:42	Rome INT: Italo's party for	[32:43] In the opening shot of this new scene we get a 180-degree pan on a dark room lit from outside. People are moving outside as if on a walkway, and their shadows are being cast into the room. This again points forward to the allegory of

	M	<p>Plato's cave in the middle of the film. The lighting is another allusion to <i>Citizen Kane</i>.</p> <p>[33:14] This is the pre-wedding party being thrown for Marcello by Italo, played by José Quaglio, whom we saw before in the scene in the radio studio. This four-minute scene was cut from prints of the film after its first screenings and was restored in 1993, under Storaro's supervision.</p> <p>[33:34] What can one say about this? It's quite a heavy-handed scene, and also quite offensive. It depicts these blind people a bit like circus freaks. They stumble, they're naïve and childlike, and also quite grotesque – someone drops a tray and they all stop to listen; then there's the woman with the thick spectacles playing the piano. They are depicted as a closed community (Italo says to Marcello "they're so hypersensitive, and when there's a sighted person among us the community gets agitated, you must excuse them") but also a community riven with tension (there's the man who starts a fight). And above all, they are being used as a metaphor: for social "blindness".</p> <p>[34:36] But the scene does also show us the kind of director Bertolucci is. He goes for these bold metaphorical and allegorical representations. He likes laying it on thick. You want to suggest that Fascism is a form of collective blindness, life in the shadows? Alright, then you introduce a scene that starts in the dark, you switch the lights on and you have a room full of people partying who still can't see, but where there is always a possibility of violence breaking out and disturbing the placid surface. You have this room adorned with paper decorations and with photographs of Mussolini, the King and Queen of Italy and the flag of the Italian Kingdom and you suggest that they "stand for" the whole collectivity of middle-class Italians living under Fascism – life just going on but in the shadows.</p> <p>[35:34] There's also an element of laying it on thick in the dialogue where Marcello tells Italo why he wants to become normal and Italo tells Marcello what a "normal man" is by giving a sighted example: the "normal man is one who turns round to look at a beautiful woman's bottom and discovers that at least 5 or 6 other people have turned round at the same time and he's happy". And then right at the end of the scene both Marcello and the camera discover that this man who says he never makes a mistake is wearing mismatched shoes. This piece of dialogue here is the most explicit statement in the film of the conformist theme and its connection with fascism.</p> <p>[36:24] But what's really striking is the little touch of sadism now where Marcello first moves away from Italo's hand to hide himself and then grasps it: a contradictory gesture that he will repeat in the last part of the film when he stops in front of Italo on the bridge and then walks past him before talking to him.</p> <p>[36:46] So this scene is also about building the picture of Marcello's character.</p>
10:36.56	Train	[37:05] We're now in the sequence of the honeymoon journey from Rome to Paris. Marcello recites a school anthology

	sequence 1	<p>poem by Gabriele d'Annunzio, a writer associated in the 1930s with Fascism. Giulia yawns. Through the train compartment window the scenery is shown in rear projection in a grainy image. It looks like a film running outside. Storaro said in an interview [with <i>Film Quarterly</i>] in 1982 that this was part of a decision they took during production not to show the real world through any windows in order to maintain a sense of artificiality: "outside the window," he said, "we have something phony, something unreal, something painted."</p> <p>[37:53] There are three reverse shots in this sequence from outside the window where the sound mix momentarily insulates the couple inside the train.</p> <p>[38:09] This scene with Trintignant and Sandrelli is played essentially as comedy, but the story material is disturbing. Giulia reveals that she too was sexually abused as a child – she was fifteen, Marcello was thirteen. So the woman Marcello thought was a typical petty bourgeois – as he told the priest, all bed and kitchen – in fact turns out to have a past that's not unlike his.</p> <p>[38:54] All the dialogue here is pretty much transposed from Moravia, apart from the name of the lawyer who abused Giulia, Perpuzio, which sounds like the word for foreskin in Italian. The name is Bertolucci's invention and it's another one of those caricatural names, like Manganiello, that gives the film a quality of grotesque fantasy. In Moravia's novel the man who abused Giulia is called Fenizio.</p>
10:39:29	Ventimiglia	<p>[39:29] We're about to move into the next sequence, set in Ventimiglia, on the Italian side of the border with France, where Marcello has been told to break his journey to get further instructions from someone called Raoul. This starts with a disorienting close-up on a non-significant character whistling and it's the most surreal sequence in the film. [PAUSE] [39:51] We get a painted seaside view that dissolves onto a real one, which is a similar picture postcard image.</p> <p>[40:15] And when Marcello gets inside the brothel it's yellow filtered and there's a madame with a bad cold who shuffles around in slippers. The same painting is reproduced on every wall. Later we will see Raoul's desk completely covered with the walnuts that he eats compulsively.</p> <p>[40:35] And it's here we get the second "preview" of Dominique Sanda, here playing a red-headed prostitute with a facial scar and wearing a Fascist fez. Manganiello is egging her on aggressively.</p> <p>[40:53] This is one of the moments where Delerue's music helps create an emotional moment, but one that we don't really understand.</p> <p>[41:08] Why is Marcello drawn to this woman who says she's mad? Moravia's novel says that what he sees in the prostitute, and later in Quadri's wife, is "purity", but this is not explained in the film. It's just left there and we are snapped out of this</p>

		<p>moment by the Fascist agent Raoul who calls Marcello to order.</p> <p>[41:34] The important piece of plot here is the instruction Raoul gives to Marcello no longer to get information about Quadri's movements but to kill him.</p> <p>[41:50] Raoul does not actually say that Marcello has to do the killing himself but he gives him a gun. Once again, the dialogue doesn't make explicit what effect this has on Marcello, and Trintignant's facial acting and his voice continue to be impassive, inexpressive of emotion. But in his gestures there is an echo of the traumatic moment of his shooting of the chauffeur, Lino.</p> <p>[42:10] He points the pistol in different directions, almost reproducing the way that as a boy he shot Lino's pistol in different directions. He points it now first at Raoul, then away, then at himself.</p> <p>[42:30] Joan Mellen commented on the end of this scene: "Clerici worries most over the loss of his hat: it is something he needs for cover, to conceal him from himself."</p>
	Train sequence 2	<p>[42:48] Back in the train, continuing the journey to Paris. Giulia tells Marcello about how when she was 15 she was seduced by the old man Perpuzio and Marcello seduces her, matching the actions she describes. And in telling the story she happens to repeat, from Perpuzio's mouth, the words that the prostitute has just said to Marcello: "crazy, completely crazy".</p> <p>[43:15] Again Delerue's music is very noticeable here, and it's quite similar to the lush romantic music he wrote for Godard's <i>Contempt</i>, which also happened to be based on a novel by Moravia and is referenced in various places in this film, in the visuals as well as on the soundtrack. Here we have these rear-projected Mediterranean seascapes, intensely yellow filtered.</p> <p>[44:34] And here the rear projection changes to a deep blue, as sunset gives way to night, and, as the camera moves toward the window, we find ourselves watching again a screen within a screen, in an Academy frame ratio, tinted like an early silent movie.</p>
10:44:53	Paris INT: hotel	<p>[44:57] Film buffs will know, because Bertolucci said so in interviews, that the Paris phone number for Professor Quadri that Marcello gives the operator, and the address of his apartment, 17 Rue St Jacques, which we hear later in this scene, were actually those of Jean-Luc Godard in 1969, at the peak of Godard's most left-wing period.</p> <p>[45:17] This is not the kind of information, of course, that ordinary viewers have access to when they watch the film. But it's worth mentioning it because it's part of a line of interpretation of the film that Bertolucci himself made public after its release. Insofar as this is a film about cinema, his love letter to 30s cinema, as well as his first really mainstream commercial production, then it's also his break with the new wave, his calculated betrayal of an alternative filmmaking style and of revolutionary cinema. Quadri, who as Marcello's former professor is his intellectual "father" in the story, also "stands for"</p>

		<p>Bertolucci's cinematic "father", Godard, at this metacinematic level.</p> <p>[46:12] Marcello in the phone call tries to gain Quadri's trust by reminding him of something he said before he left Italy in 1928, to begin his self-imposed exile as an anti-fascist. Quadri had said "For me the time for reflection is over; now the time for action is starting".</p> <p>[46:35] This statement, as critics have noted, echoes, and inverts, the one made by the character Bruno Forestier right at the beginning of Godard's film <i>Le Petit soldat</i>, released in 1963. And there's a strong reminiscence of Bruno, the reluctant right-wing assassin played by Michel Subor, in Bertolucci's Marcello. But Quadri's words are also close to ones he says in Moravia's novel, which was written in 1949: "I've decided to pass from thought to action".</p> <p>[47:15] Giulia paces up and down wondering what to wear for the visit to Quadri. Costume, which is drawn attention to here in the dialogue, becomes very visible from now on in the film, where both Giulia and Anna, Quadri's wife – played by Dominique Sanda – become the focus of the spectator's attention.</p> <p>[47:34] After this cutaway to Manganiello waiting outside we get an extraordinary moment when Marcello bursts into a growl [PAUSE FOR GROWL], which frightens Giulia and freezes her movement. It suggests all the repressed material he keeps inside him suddenly breaking out: that part of him that she doesn't know. Bertolucci said in an interview with Marilyn Goldin in 1972: "I chose Trintignant because when I think of him two adjectives immediately come to mind: moving and sinister."</p>
10:48:16	Paris EXT: Gare d'Orsay	[48:16] Marcello has just refused to take Manganiello's phone call and we now get a long cat and mouse game where Manganiello pursues Marcello to find out what's going on and Marcello dismisses or evades him.
10:49:10	Paris INT: Quadri apt	<p>[49:10] The arrival at Quadri's apartment sets up two different encounters. The first is with one of the young men who work with Quadri and act as his line of defence from the outside world. The second is with Quadri's wife, Anna.</p> <p>[49:31] The device of having the family dog bark and scare Giulia down the stairs is a way of clearing the stage for the first encounter between Marcello and Anna, where an immediate sexual chemistry is suggested .. again cued by the music.</p> <p>[50:06] Dominique Sanda was 18 when she acted in this film. Bertolucci cast her after seeing her in Bresson's film <i>Une femme douce</i> and deciding she was perfect for the role of Anna. Before casting her he had consider a number of other possible actors, including Brigitte Bardot. But he said of Bardot that "in spite of all the admiration I had for her she couldn't possibly represent somebody transgressive".</p> <p>[50:34] Bertolucci cast Sanda again, with a similar role as a modern woman, in his Italian historical epic <i>1900 (Novecento)</i>.</p> <p>[51:00] Despite the visible erotic exchange of looks between Anna and Marcello on their first meeting Marcello says he</p>

		<p>senses she is hostile to him. He will be proved right when she tells him later that she knows he's a Fascist spy. In fact, the whole relationship with Anna is played out, on her side, over this tension between attraction and repulsion towards Marcello, desire and aggression.</p> <p>[51:30] Bertolucci said that Dominique Sanda reminded him of a 1930s movie star: "she had an aura of this thing, glamour, which didn't exist any more, like Marlene Dietrich..., like Garbo .., that kind of aura."</p> <p>[51:45] Quadri's apartment exudes a sense of opulence, but also a certain dreamlike strangeness, particularly in this extraordinary piece of set, a sort of cross between the belly of a whale, a vagina, and the nave of a church.</p> <p>[52:06] One of Quadri's young associates asks ironically "Are people still permitted to dance in Italy?" The ideological gap between them on the one hand and the apolitical Giulia on the other, but also the Fascist Marcello, becomes very clear. Bertolucci also suggested that Anna is attractive to Marcello because she's politically committed. As he said in an interview: "That's why Marcello falls in love with her: she represents everything he refuses to be. She is the exact opposite of the wife he chose."</p> <p>[52:36] These scenes in Paris introduce us to a representation of anti-fascism that is in some ways the counterpart of the fictionalized version of Fascism we've seen in the earlier scenes of the film. The young men are caricatures of leftist intellectuals: a couple of them with long hair, one with spectacles, one with a scarf. Despite their costumes, they belong as much to the 1960s as to the 30s. And there's a rather sinister air about them.</p> <p>[52:58] And we also see the beginning of Anna's bond with Giulia. She asks Giulia to tell her about her sexual history.</p>
10:53:09	Paris INT: Quadri's study	<p>[53:09] The scene in Professor Quadri's study was actually shot in Rome, in a second-floor apartment. The room was lit both from inside and with an arc light mounted on a platform outside the window on the right. As Trintignant closes the left window just the arc is left on, with cigarette smoke rising from the ashtray. The actor who plays Quadri is Enzo Tarascio.</p> <p>[53:34] Storaro's visual reference here was Caravaggio's painting "The Calling of Saint Matthew" in the church of San Luigi de' Francesi in Rome. This has a beam of sunlight coming from a window outside the frame of the painting to the right. There the idea is a divine light that picks out the future Saint Matthew seated at a table.</p> <p>[53:53] Here the idea, made explicit in the dialogue, is that of the allegory of the prisoners in the cave in Book 7 of Plato's <i>Republic</i>. The prisoners who mistake shadows for reality are, as Marcello comments, like people living under Fascism. This piece of dialogue is entirely Bertolucci's invention and has no counterpart in Moravia's novel.</p>

		<p>[54:15] In fact this scene, like so much of the film, is a deliberately theatrical set piece. As Marcello raises his hand to describe the statues being carried by the people walking behind the prisoners he “accidentally” makes a Fascist salute – the so-called “Roman salute” – picked up also as a shadow on the wall.</p> <p>[54:37] But this allegory is also a representation of cinema. Bertolucci said about this scene: “symbolically the viewers are like prisoners, sitting, forced to look at these shadows of reality, because cinema is not reality itself, it’s the shadow of reality”.</p> <p>[55:02] So even in this most politically didactic scene, the film works at two different levels: it’s a comment on Fascism as a collective illusion or mass deception and it’s a film that reminds us that it’s a piece of cinema, and that all cinema is illusion.</p> <p>[55:19] And there’s also a third level, which is beginning to be brought to our attention here: it’s a film about a symbolic father-son relationship. Professor Quadri was Marcello’s advisor for the thesis he never completed on Plato’s allegory of the cave, and he was a father figure to the young student. But he left Italy to carry out his anti-Fascist activities from abroad and to propagate the message to others from exile. Marcello speaks here with the anger of the abandoned son. And of course we remember that he’s come here with orders to kill this father figure. And he is about to seduce his wife. So there’s also the story of Oedipus as well as of Plato’s cave.</p>
10:56:02	Paris INT: Quadri apt: corridor and bedrooms	<p>[56:05] As Marcello leaves the ascetic and asexual space of Quadri’s study we’re about to enter a different space, which is erotically charged and with a decadent quality. Giulia and Anna are talking about lovers. Giulia is smoking, wrapped in Anna’s fox furs. We can hear part of a poem: [PAUSE]</p> <p>[56:25] it’s by Apollinaire and it’s about the prostitute Marizibell who has been brought over from a brothel in Shanghai. This is relevant to what’s about to happen.</p> <p>[56:34] Anna catches sight of Marcello looking at them from outside the door, winds up the gramophone then goes to meet him in the next room.</p> <p>[56:50] She says to him, in French, “do you often spy on people like that?”.</p> <p>[56:56] His behaviour with her is remarkably forward. He tells her not to talk in French and says he met a woman who had the same eyes as her: a prostitute. And it’s as if this allows him to treat <i>her</i> as a prostitute and seduce her in her own home in the room next to where his wife is sitting.</p> <p>[57:18] If Bertolucci adds things to the film that weren’t in Moravia’s novel, like the character of Italo and the blind people’s party or the dialogue with Quadri about Plato’s cave, he also, as we’ve already seen, subtracts quite a lot, such as all the</p>

		<p>detail about Marcello's childhood. And there's material subtracted here too, which makes Marcello's behaviour towards Anna, and hers towards him, much more enigmatic than in the novel. Why does she give in to his seduction? Why does she smile at him after they have kissed on the bed?</p> <p>[57:55] It could just be a filmic cliché but it's not really that. In the novel she tells Marcello in the scene that corresponds to this one that she knows he's a spy, and so does her husband. He tells her he likes her, she says that horrifies her. He makes a pass at her, she pulls away, she points out that he's on his honeymoon and he already wants to betray to his wife. She threatens to call her husband and she slaps Marcello. But then straight afterwards she caresses the cheek she's slapped and tells him she likes him too. Moravia's scene is perhaps stronger on plausibility, if one wants to use that notion, but it's also more predictable, more obvious. By cutting out all that dialogue Bertolucci makes the interaction between Marcello and Anna ambiguous and mysterious. He also adds this nice little touch of Marcello again demonstrating his abilities as a spy, by taking from her ballet shoe the address of her dance school.</p>
10:58:48	Paris EXT: Trocadéro	<p>[58:52] Back to the blue filtered light of the Paris exteriors and a location that is perfectly in tune with the 30s setting. This is the esplanade of the Trocadéro by the Palais de Chaillot, rebuilt in 1937 in a modern style very similar to that of Italian Fascist monumentalism, with a wide open space and neoclassical sculptures on plinths.</p> <p>[59:22] And there's this piece of symptomatic cold cruelty by Marcello. He packs Giulia off in a taxi to go up the Eiffel Tower on her own, allowing him to go off and pursue Anna....</p>
10:59:35	Paris INT: Ballet school	<p>[59:36] ...who we see here, suitably eroticized, in a leotard and leggings with pink hairband and a cane.</p> <p>[59:56] The emphasis for the next half a minute is all on her and on Marcello watching her unobserved. So it's another scene of voyeurism, like when he spied on her and Giulia through the door, or earlier when he saw the Fascist minister with the woman through the curtain.</p> <p>[11:00:28] Finally, she notices in one of the mirrors that he's in the room and she tells the students to take a break.</p> <p>[11:00:44] There will be another scene of voyeurism later, when Marcello watches Anna as she touches Giulia on the bed. And we can add that there will be even another one after that, when Marcello watches through the window of the car as Quadri is murdered and then as Anna pleads for help. In all cases, Marcello is in the position of a spectator, which can involve his projections of desire but also of aggression from a safe position, one in which he is protected from the intrusions of reality.</p> <p>[11:01:16] And in fact this scene with Anna in the backroom of the ballet school is the only one in which Marcello seems to act purposefully, proposing that they run away together to Brazil. But she thwarts his proposition by forcing him to read a letter from an anti-fascist political prisoner in Italy describing torture and mock executions.</p>

		<p>[11:01:34] By making Marcello read the letter Anna appears to gain the upper hand, by revealing that she knows he's a Fascist spy, and that her husband does as well.</p> <p>[11:01:52] And she effectively rebuts him by calling him a worm and saying he disgusts her.</p> <p>[11:02:31] But what this actually leads to is a more complex transaction, where Anna offers herself sexually to Marcello in order to protect herself and her husband from being harmed by him. Or at least that is one reading of what's going on here.</p> <p>[11:02:48] The yellow and blue light and Sanda's facial expression, as well as the rather lugubrious music, serve to de-eroticize the scene and turn into one of a calculated self-sacrifice. "When she undresses", Bertolucci said, "she is going to the slaughterhouse". But Marcello refuses to promise to accept the terms of the transaction.</p>
11:03:35	Paris EXT: Avenue Matignon, Jacques Heim store	<p>[11:03:35] A disorienting cut to these various animal muzzles moves us into the shopping scene where Anna is taking Giulia to the Heim store on Avenue Matignon and multiple stalking is taking place. Anna and Giulia are on the hunt for clothes, Marcello is stalking Anna, Manganiello is stalking Marcello, and the whole thing is accompanied by a more complex piece of score by Delerue where the motif that identifies Manganiello following Marcello is mixed with a clichéd accordion piece that evokes Frenchness and the opening theme tune comes back in as well. The whole thing sounds and even looks like a musical now.</p> <p>[11:04:20] Visually what's so striking about this scene is the use of brightly illuminated multicoloured shop windows framed with the blue light of the exterior. This suggests once again a world of pure fantasy, of pleasure – cinematic pleasure: the windows are like little screens into which we can peek, and at one point we look in on Anna and Giulia inside one of them. But it's also an opulent world, one of high bourgeois fashion and consumption. And it's a feminine world, one in contrast with the masculine closure of Marcello and the ascetic seriousness of Quadri and his young male associates.</p>
11:05:07	Paris EXT: Square Louis XVI	<p>[11:05:08] The viewer is drawn into this pleasure of looking too, and clothes play a large part in this pleasure. The costumes worn by Sandrelli and Sanda were designed by Gitt Magrini and were made by the Italian couturier Tirelli. But what Anna is saying to Giulia here is also significant. She's talking about the house that she and Quadri have in Savoy, in the French Alps, and saying they don't often leave Paris now because of what's happening in Spain. The reference is to the Spanish Civil War, which lasted from 1936 to 1939, and was the first great showdown in Europe between Fascism and anti-Fascism. It's another reminder that Anna may enjoy the high life but she's also an anti-Fascist. Or, conversely, that some anti-fascists were also middle-class people who enjoyed the high life.</p> <p>[11:05:56] Since we came into the Paris section of the story there has been less moving back and forward between the car journey frame and Marcello's memories of the past. Instead, there's now more alternation between the sexual narrative involving Marcello, Anna and Giulia and the thriller narrative involving Marcello, Manganiello, and Quadri. The main plot</p>

		<p>point here is that as Marcello has become infatuated with Anna, he has become disengaged from his mission, and even averse to the idea of carrying it out. So Manganiello has to tell him to concentrate on following Quadri, not his wife, and not to flake out.</p> <p>[11:06:38] This scene in the Square Louis Seize is punctuated by this little joke. Manganiello has been talking to Marcello, who he knows is hiding there. The old lady says in French: “There’s no point shouting like that at the birds. They don’t understand Italian. Merde. You think there are Italian birds in Paris?” And then the scene ends with Manganiello too being blocked out by a tree. [OK SLIGHT OVERRUN TO NEXT SCENE]</p>
	Paris INT: hotel	<p>[11:07:00] Back in his super-elegant hotel, another glimpse of high-bourgeois high life, and also a display just coming up of the little visual exuberances that were a hallmark of Bertolucci’s films in this period: the camera dollies back in the opposite direction from the movement of the character. This is an exact reverse of the shot at the beginning of the film where it dollied forward towards the glass front door of the hotel as Trintignant walked towards it.</p> <p>[11:07:34] And here is that next scene of voyeurism coming up, where Marcello watches Anna seducing Giulia, this time in the hotel room he shares with his wife: on his territory so to speak. And again Anna is aware that he’s watching and Giulia isn’t aware. So Anna consciously performs her seduction of Giulia in front of Marcello. The two reverse shots onto the dark space of the open door show us the space of the unseen viewer, Marcello, but we also get his voyeuristic view through the door frame.</p> <p>[11:08:40] There is a metacinematic dimension here too. Let’s hear again what Bertolucci had to say about this: “I think when he’s spying on the two girls – his wife and Dominique Sanda – having this kind of erotic moment together, I understood then seeing the film that maybe the reason I love making cinema is because, in a way, it’s a repetition of that childish but very important moment” – in other words, the moment of the child’s voyeurism on his or her parents: Freud’s “primal scene”.</p> <p>[11:09:12] And now again a reverse of the shot which opened the scene of voyeurism, just to bookend it and close it off: Trintignant walks back towards camera as it moves towards him.</p>
11:09:27	Paris EXT: woman selling violets	<p>[11:09:36] This is another rather surreal scene, again partly because of the colour distortion. A woman with bad teeth sells Marcello some Parma violets – Parma was Bertolucci’s home town so there’s another in-reference here – and then she is joined by two rather well-dressed and well-fed waifs and together they sing the Internationale – the great anthem of Communist internationalism. They follow Marcello and an immaculately dressed and made-up Anna down the street.</p> <p>[11:10:19] It’s not clear whether they’re accompanying them or stalking them. If we take this at a literal level it’s another reminder, like Anna’s mention of the Spanish Civil War, of the fact that we’re in the 30s, in France, which had a Popular Front, anti-Fascist government at this time, containing Socialists and Communists, and where anti-Fascist exiles from both</p>

		<p>Italy and Germany were active. But there's something not quite right about this image of anti-Fascism. As with the young men who work with Quadri, there seems to be a slightly sinister quality to it.</p> <p>[11:11:00] This two-shot is a good example of how Bertolucci likes to wrap the camera around his subjects, moving it first to one side and then back again. And it also shows once more the extraordinary quality of Storaro's lighting, with light being thrown forward here from behind the glass while people are visible through it.</p> <p>[11:11:26] So we're drawn as spectators right into this kiss, where Anna turns vampire.</p>
11:11:49	Paris INT: hotel	<p>[11:12:15] An important bit of plot here: Giulia inadvertently gives Marcello just the piece of information he needs to nail Quadri, namely that he is going to set off by car the next day for his house in the French Alps and she has the address of where he's going. Equally important for him is the news that Anna is going to stay behind in Paris and join her husband a couple of days later.</p> <p>[11:12:50] And finally there's Giulia's casual remark that all around Quadri's house in Savoy there are immense woods where no-one ever goes.</p> <p>[11:13:05] There was a well-known real life model for the assassination of Professor Quadri in this story and that's the assassination of the Italian antifascist Carlo Rosselli. He was murdered, together with his brother Nello, in France in 1937 as they were driving on holiday.</p>
11:13:16	Paris INT: Chinese restaurant	<p>[11:13:20] There are some important differences between the Rosselli murders and the account of the killing of the Quadris in <i>The Conformist</i>. Carlo Rosselli was not a university professor like the fictional Luca Quadri, even though he had done some university teaching, and he was killed along with his brother, not his wife, in Normandy, not in Savoy, and in June 1937, not in October 1938. And his wife was English, not French, and they had two children.</p> <p>[11:13:45] But the allusion to the Rosselli case is nevertheless transparent. Alberto Moravia was the cousin of the Rossellis, and he clearly had their assassination in mind when he wrote <i>The Conformist</i> twelve years after it happened. The two brothers were killed by agents of the French right-wing secret organization known as the Cagoule, almost certainly in collusion with the Fascist secret services in Italy – the OVRA – and probably as an exchange of favours for the Fascists helping the Cagoule with their plans for a right-wing coup d'état in France. The real target in the double murder was Carlo Rosselli, who was an important anti-Fascist activist, a real thorn in the side of the regime, and one of the leaders in exile of a movement called Giustizia e Libertà: Justice and Freedom. He had been in Spain at the beginning of the Civil War, where he made an anti-Fascist radio broadcast addressed to Italians, and he had then moved to Paris. A number of Italians had been assigned to spy on him there. One of them, whom Moravia knew, was called Giacomo Antonini, and he wrote frequent reports to the Italian secret police, including one that said Carlo Rosselli had told him Mussolini had to be assassinated. Carlo's brother, Nello, was not an active antifascist and he just had the bad fortune to be visiting Carlo on holiday when he</p>

		<p>got caught up in the assassination trap and killed as well.</p> <p>[11:15:10] There's some important political content in this scene, which is also marked by the comic business of Giulia's drunken giggling and Marcello playing footsie with Anna. Anna has reminded Marcello again of the anti-fascist prisoners in Italy, and Quadri has reminded her that he has invited Marcello to dinner despite their differences of opinion. As Anna and Quadri get up to change places the camera travels off in a tracking shot that picks up Manganiello eating alone a few tables away. He is cued with his now familiar musical leitmotiv.</p> <p>[11:15:46] And then when we return to the table Quadri will ask Marcello for what he calls a "proof of friendship". He asks him to deliver a letter to his contacts in Italy, saying that if he gets caught then time in a Fascist jail will only do him good.</p>
	Paris INT: Chinese restaurant kitchen	<p>[11:16:22] This scene in the kitchen of the Chinese restaurant is the key showdown between Manganiello and Marcello before the assassination.</p> <p>[11:16:31] Marcello has got cold feet and Manganiello tells him to screw his courage to the sticking place. It is now Manganiello who reminds Marcello that he's a <i>camerata</i>, not his superior, and that they're in a war together.</p> <p>[11:16:42] The whole dialogue is staged under a swinging light that casts shadows back and forth. Once again it's the visual motif of light and shadow that runs through the film and once again it's a brilliant piece of atmospheric lighting by Storaro and of imaginative mise en scène by Bertolucci with a continually moving camera and the waiters just getting on with their work on another plane of action behind the two characters.</p> <p>[11:17:26] It's worth quoting here what the American director Paul Schrader said about this film: "it's a real filmmaker's film. Screening this film is almost like rechecking the dictionary, it's just how you can do things. [...] <i>The Conformist</i> is the first gunshot in the revolution back to visual style in American films. You saw that in films by Coppola and Scorsese. Bernardo wrote the Bible and we all paced through it".</p>
	Paris EXT/INT: Chez Gégène at Joinville-le-Pont	<p>[11:18:03] This is the scene of the dance hall where the two couples go after dinner. It's a real location, a <i>guinguette</i> called Chez Gégène outside Paris at Joinville-le-Pont, just near one of the major French film studios. All the scenes in the film were shot in real locations, apart from the one in the radio station at the beginning, which was shot in the studio at Cinecittà.</p> <p>[11:18:24] But once again it's a real location transfigured by lighting. The intense blue outside is unreal, and it makes the red and white window frames inside seem unreal, just as the blue-filtered exteriors in Paris are unreal, or the white exterior of the Palazzo dei Congressi used for Marcello's father's asylum.</p> <p>[11:18:42] Here the dance between the two beautiful women is put on display in front of their husbands who appear at this point as voyeurs outside the window. It will emerge in a minute that Marcello finds their display disturbing and he wants</p>

	<p>them to stop but Quadri says he finds them beautiful.</p> <p>[11:19:06] Quadri reveals that he's just played a double bluff on Marcello. The letter he asked him to take to Rome, and which Marcello has refused to take, was just blank paper. It was a trick to put him to the test. If he really was the Fascist he claims to be he would have agreed to take the letter and used it against Quadri's antifascist contacts. This implies that Quadri really trusts the man who's been sent to kill him.</p> <p>[11:19:26] Bertolucci said he put Laurel and Hardy in here "because when a situation gets too dramatic you have to dedramatize a bit. Laurel and Hardy meant 'Careful, let's not take ourselves too seriously'".</p> <p>[11:19:37] The two women stand out from the people around them also because of the way they're dressed. The others are working-class or lower-middle class people dressed up for an evening out. Most of the women wear three-quarter length dresses but Anna and Giulia have long ones and they are haute couture. All the costumes in the film were made by Tirelli, who were famous theatrical costume makers and had made the costumes for such films as Visconti's <i>The Leopard</i>. This is the dress that Giulia is supposed to have bought at the Jacques Heim store in Paris.</p> <p>[11:20:09] Bertolucci once complained in an interview "no one ever asks me why I move the camera in a particular way or why I use tracking shots or how long they were", so let's let him talk us through this scene in his own words: "Giulia dances the tango with Anna and they kiss. Then there is a circle of people around them and the camera is high up. They begin to do a sort of farandole and the people follow them."</p> <p>[11:20:34] "As the farandole grows the camera descends on a crane, taking in the orchestra [which we see up in the gallery]"</p> <p>[11:20:43] "Then in the next shot we see Marcello and the professor watching them, amused. People pass dancing in front of them and someone takes the professor's hand. Marcello stays alone. Behind him there's a window, and as Giulia passes outside it, leading the dance, the camera leaves Marcello to follow her..."</p> <p>[11:21:02] "and to arrive on Manganiello, the professional assassin, who's sitting across the room."</p> <p>[11:21:10] "Marcello is tapping on the table, following the rhythm of the dance. When he sees Manganiello he stops, and Manganiello looks at him, and then <i>he</i> starts tapping."</p> <p>[11:21:22] "So these are the things", Bertolucci concludes: "découpage, camera, technique. It's only though technique that one arrives at doing things".</p>
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		<p>[11:21:32] Marcello now betrays the man with whom he's ingratiated himself and who has just said he trusts him. He hands the address where Quadri is going to travel tomorrow to Manganiello and walks away.</p> <p>[11:21:45] Manganiello's words suggest that Marcello's job is finished. He's given him the tip-off he needs and he can go. But as he moves away he gets caught up in the coils of the farandole, as if he's trapped by a snake or in a spider's web. This is shown from a high crane shot over the dancers and also from body level.</p> <p>[11:22:19] Dance scenes, where important bits of story also happen, are something of a trademark of Bertolucci's films of this period. There is one in <i>The Spider's Stratagem</i>, and there is one near the end of <i>Last Tango in Paris</i>, his next film after <i>The Conformist</i>, released in 1972.</p> <p>[11:22:40] Manganiello, having got the information he needs, now leaves, but before this scene closes we go back the two couples one last time. They've have swapped partners and we get two pieces of dialogue. One is frivolous: it's the drunken Giulia being mildly flirtatious with Quadri.</p> <p>[11:23:05] The other piece of dialogue is intense and serious: it's Anna telling Marcello that she's changed her mind and decided to travel tomorrow with her husband. Marcello pleads with her not to go on that trip. Anna agrees to stay behind in Paris.</p> <p>[11:24:14] As the camera pulls back we're about to return, finally, to the car journey, the frame narrative. The long flashback that opened at the beginning is now closing and we get a repetition in reverse of the same stylistic device: a cut and a long sound bridge.</p>
	Car journey and assassination sequence	<p>[11:24:35] The dream that Marcello recounts to Manganiello in the car is a wish fulfilment fantasy that fits with the metaphor of blindness and vision that started with the scenes with Italo and continued with the allegory of the cave. But of course this fantasy is completely at odds with the reality of what is about to happen: the killing of both Quadri and Anna.</p> <p>[PAUSE WHILE MARCELLO RECOUNTS DREAM]</p> <p>[11:25:24] At the end of the scene in the dance hall we saw Marcello give Manganiello the address of where Quadri was headed the next day and Manganiello saying "see you in Rome". And in fact, in the novel, Marcello leaves Paris after giving this tip-off about Quadri's movements and he's not present when Quadri and his wife are murdered.</p> <p>[11:25:45] In the film, by contrast, his presence at the murder scene is dramatically very important, but there's nevertheless a certain strangeness about it. At the start of the car journey he told Manganiello he wants him to speed up so they can save Anna, but Manganiello points out that they can't leave witnesses. Marcello took the gun from the hotel and now he's</p>

	<p>about to cock it, but he doesn't need to use it, since there are four assassins waiting ready to kill Quadri and Anna. Perhaps these ambiguities in the plot are deliberate, rather than careless. They add to the suspense and they reinforce the image of Marcello as unable to act purposefully, as at once cruel and emotionally detached.</p> <p>[11:26:35] The assassination scene is the dramatic culmination of the film. It's what everything has been leading up to. Bertolucci said in 2002: "what we call suspense [...] is the secret of many of the films I love. <i>Something is about to happen</i>. The film becomes a laying siege, and a waiting and a long goodbye, creating the most poetic of special effects: bodies, landscapes, objects become transparent, we can see through them, and what we can read within them contaminates and enriches the drama of the film."</p> <p>[11:27:08] These scenes in a snowy landscape were shot in winter on the Abetone, a mountain resort in Tuscany. The way the ambush is staged is quite similar to the way the attack on the Rosselli brothers was carried out. There too the killers had been tipped off about the route and one car, with three of the killers inside it, blocked the road in front, faking a breakdown, while another car following stopped behind and trapped them. Nello Rosselli got out to assist the man bent over the car in front and was shot by him, and then stabbed in the back by another man. Carlo Rosselli was shot while still in the driver's seat. The killers dragged both bodies into the woods and covered them with twigs and leaves. They made a failed attempt to blow up the car and then left the scene.</p> <p>[11:27:50] But there, as the saying goes, the similarity ends. The end credits of <i>The Conformist</i> have a standard disclaimer about any reference to people or events that really happened being purely coincidental.</p> <p>[11:28:06] The fact remains that the killing in France of the Rosselli brothers in 1937 was an event of major political importance. There was a huge anti-fascist demonstration at their funeral in Paris. Anti-fascist Italians all knew about it, Moravia was a close relative of the brothers, and Bertolucci was certainly aware of it. It showed Fascism in its most naked and brutal form, with all its narcissistic self-image – its modernist architecture, its glamour, its film culture – stripped away.</p> <p>[11:28:44] All the same, the scene of the killing in the film is just as much a stylised construction as all the rest of it. It's staged like a piece of filmed theatre: carefully choreographed, blocked, lit and edited.</p> <p>[11:29:00] Three of the killers come out of the woods silhouetted against the sunlight streaming through the trees.</p> <p>[11:29:12] The music is suspended and we hear just the wind howling and other diegetic sound effects like leaves crunching and car doors slamming.</p> <p>[11:29:30] The killings of both Quadri and Anna are also highly theatrical. Quadri is stabbed from front and back, almost rhythmically. An obvious reference is to the assassination of Julius Caesar. Anna is going to be hunted down like a deer and</p>
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	<p>there will be a switch to handheld camera as they chase her. And when she is shot we will see blood that looks like paint smeared all over her face but hardly anywhere else on her costume.</p> <p>[11:29:54] And then there's the facial acting of both Trintignant and Sanda. He is impassive, betraying no feeling. Her face is screwed up into expressions of pure terror and horror trying to block out with her hands what she sees.</p> <p>[11:30:35] But for all this stylization the scene remains very frightening and very disturbing, particularly when the killers all turn on Anna and perhaps most of all in this terrible moment of recognition when she reaches the other car, sees Marcello, bangs on the window, screams, and he sits there immobile, flinching only when he hears the gunshots from outside.</p> <p>[11:31:01] Bertolucci described Sanda's face in these shots as being like a sculpture. It has something about it of the sculpted demon mask of Noh theatre.</p> <p>[11:31:32] If Anna's expectation was that Marcello would help her, Manganiello's evidently was that he should have killed her. Now we can see the dramatic point of Marcello carrying a gun that he doesn't use. And here Manganiello reveals himself to be the pure Fascist thug we've suspected he was all along, despite his moments of polite deference towards Marcello.</p> <p>[11:32:02] Let's come back to the multiple levels on which the film works. At the level of historical representation it's about a man in the 1930s who wants to conform, to become a good Fascist, in order to bury the memory of his exceptional past: the fact that he killed a man when he was a boy.</p> <p>[11:32:20] But, at another level, as we've seen, the film is also about Bertolucci's understanding of Fascism and anti-fascism from a left point of view in the late 60s. The Fascism he depicts is pure façade, a monumental and sometimes beautiful surface which covers over the reality of violence and class power on which it's founded. People who support it live in a collective illusion. Behind this illusion is the reality of the power of the capitalists and the landowners, all those who prop up the regime in their own interests.</p> <p>[11:32:50] The killing of Quadri and his wife by assassins backed by the Fascist state, like the killing of the Rosselli brothers to which it alludes, shows this violence in its most naked form. This class representation of Fascism will be made explicit in the next film Bertolucci was to make about Italian history in the first half of the twentieth century: <i>Novecento</i> or <i>1900</i>. But already when he made <i>The Conformist</i> he was clear about its contemporary relevance. He said in an interview on French television in 1971, the week after the film was released in France, "Historical Fascism is dead, but the bourgeoisie is still there, firmly in place. [...] Today we're seeing a reemergence of fascism in Italy, and I believe that the forces that financed it in 1921-22 [...] are the same that are financing it today".</p>
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11:33:34	Rome INT: Giulia's apt	<p>[11:33:36] After the killing of the Quadris the story jumps forward five years to 1943. Marcello and Giulia now have a little daughter called Marta. She's wearing her mother's hat and feather boa. On the radio we hear the announcement of the fall of Mussolini on July 25th following Italy's disastrous reversals during World War Two. Marshal Badoglio has been appointed caretaker prime minister. It was after this that Italy would begun to negotiate a secret armistice with the Allies.</p> <p>[11:34:07] The Clerici couple seem to have suffered some reversals too, perhaps also as a result of the war. They are back living in Giulia's mother's apartment, but the maid is no longer there, nor is the mother, whose photo we will see on a sideboard in the daughter's bedroom. They're sharing the apartment with a poorer family, perhaps evacuees from a bombed part of the city, or perhaps paying tenants – it's not clear. Both Giulia and Marcello seem engrossed as they listen to the radio announcement but they're sitting apart.</p> <p>[11:34:38] Giulia is dressed more plainly, though still in stripes.</p> <p>[11:34:42] Marcello, who had seemed so sceptical about marriage and religion in the confession scene, now plays with his daughter and recites the Hail Mary with her as he puts her to bed. Has he perhaps really succeeded in becoming the perfect conformist?</p> <p>[11:34:56] These closing scenes of the film also draw our attention to another dimension of the story that is important: its treatment of anti-Fascism. When Marcello goes out into the streets of Rome, after this scene in the apartment, we will see people celebrating the fall of the regime. They march arm in arm singing anti-Fascist or patriotic songs. But something about this celebration of the end of Fascism rings false, even slightly sinister, and it appears just as theatrical as the rest of the film. And this connects up with that somewhat caricatural and sinister air of the anti-Fascist exiles around Quadri in Paris, and even of Quadri himself, who is rather cold and aloof, too much the professor, a theorist rather than an activist. Moravia's portrait of Quadri was really quite cruel and unsympathetic. Bertolucci's is a bit less so.</p> <p>[11:35:48] This is what Bertolucci said to Marilyn Goldin in 1972 about Quadri and Anna: "For me the professor and his wife were the other side of the coin 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."</p> <p>[11:36:08] Listening to his words now, they seem to be a very harsh ultraleftist judgement. The phrase "they are not saved" suggests that in some ways when Quadri and Anna are killed they are being punished for what one might call the class insincerity of being anti-Fascists who remain tied to bourgeois values: eating out in a Chinese restaurant, wearing expensive clothes (in Anna's case), going dancing, being detached from the reality of the class struggle.</p> <p>[11:36:33] This idea of the killing of the Quadris as a punishment is not as implausible as it may seem. It ties in with the psychoanalytic dimension of the film, the Oedipal narrative whereby the symbolic son – Marcello – enters the space of the</p>
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		<p>symbolic father, Quadri, displaces him by seducing his wife, and then throws both of them over: both have to die. And, as we've seen, this Oedipal narrative has a counterpart, at the filmic level, of the 28-year-old Bernardo Bertolucci overthrowing his cinematic fathers, most notably Jean-Luc Godard, and espousing a "decadent" style, a pastiche of his beloved films of the 1930s. The overthrowing involves a struggle. In this long take, for instance, the placing of the two actors on either side of an interior wall, with the camera first moving between them and then staying still, which exactly repeats the framing of that earlier shot in Giulia's apartment when the mother was present, is a kind of quotation of Godard's blockings of Michel Piccoli and Brigitte Bardot in their Rome apartment in <i>Contempt</i>. So Bertolucci shows he is drawn back to what he is trying to go beyond. After moving over towards Marcello's side the camera tracks slowly forward to frame both actors in medium close up.</p> <p>[11:38:27] Sandrelli's acting shows another dimension for the first time here, and reveals another layer of Giulia's character. She is not as naive as she has seemed. She has known for the last five years that Marcello was a spy for the Fascist state. But she says she accepts what he has done and is worried now about his own safety. So she too is prepared to be complicit with corruption, and with murder, for the sake of reason of state, and of her own marriage.</p> <p>[11:39:04] Marcello's last remark in this scene, "I want to see how a dictatorship falls", is adapted from a similar one in Moravia's novel. As we get into the closing scenes of the film it's interesting to see again both the parallels with its literary source and the changes Bertolucci makes in relation to it.</p>
11:39:24	Rome EXT: Ponte S. Angelo	<p>[11:39:25] We've just seen the light go on and off in the apartment and this nighttime outdoor sequence in Rome is marked by lights flashing in the darkness – bicycle lamps, motorcycle headlamps, candles, a fire burning. Marcello is on the Ponte Sant'Angelo, where he has arranged to meet Italo. He is standing under an improvised anti-fascist placard that spells out the name of Mussolini as a sentence: M for monster and so on. Marcello at first walks past Italo and then points out that he's still wearing his Fascist party badge.</p> <p>[11:40:02] A motorcycle is dragging behind it a battered head of Mussolini from a decapitated statue. There was in fact a wave of antifascist iconoclasm all over Italy on and after the night of 25 July 1943, and this scene establishes realistically just how dangerous it is for Italo to go out wearing his party badge.</p>

11:40:23	Rome EXT: Teatro di Marcello	<p>[11:40:23] The scene changes to a row of ancient Roman arches with prostitutes beneath them and children with various bits of booty. Some accounts of the film say this is the Colosseum but it's not: it's another ancient building, the Theatre of Marcellus, in Italian Teatro di Marcello. The significance of this name can hardly escape us. It's here that the scene of Marcello's re-encounter with Lino, whom he thought he had killed 26 years earlier, is going to be staged. Lino is picking up a young Roman man and Marcello overhears him, recognizes his voice – he's speaking Sicilian – and then hears him mention that he has a kimono like Madame Butterfly, just as he said to Marcello years ago.</p> <p>[11:41:20] In the terms of classical tragedy, Marcello's encounter with Lino here involves what Aristotle called anagnorisis, a moment of recognition or discovery, when a character moves from a state of ignorance to one of knowledge. The recognition produces a dramatic change in the life of the protagonist.</p> <p>[11:41:42] The moment Marcello understands that he has not killed Lino, his whole life between that point and now comes to look different to him. If he didn't kill as a child then he didn't need to become a conformist, a perfect Fascist, to atone for his exceptional past. And he didn't need to engineer the killing of Professor Quadri, with the unintended consequence of the killing of Anna, in order to prove that he was a loyal Fascist. As he had said to the priest in the confession scene: "I'm confessing today for the crime I'm going to commit tomorrow, blood that washes away blood. It's the price society demands of me and I will pay it".</p> <p>[11:42:26] With the reappearance of Lino, his whole personal economy of atonement and paying back collapses and he now tries to transfer the blame onto Lino, shouting out that it's Lino who killed Quadri, that he's the real assassin.</p> <p>[11:43:19] And he then turns his anger onto Italo, his supposed friend and the contact in the Fascist Party who initially recommended him to the minister. Italo is another substitute father figure whom he now symbolically kills. He starts to punch him...</p> <p>[11:43:51] and then he abandons him to his fate in the middle of the path around the theatre just as a crowd is about to sweeps towards them.</p> <p>[11:44:00] They are people celebrating the fall of Mussolini and we hear a mixture of songs: the patriotic national anthem, "Fratelli d'Italia", then the Communist song "Bandiera rossa" (red flag) and then the Internationale again.</p> <p>[11:44:30] The ending of the film is quite different from the end of the novel. In the novel Marcello does go outside after the radio announcement and he does see Lino again. In fact, there it's <i>Lino</i> who recognises <i>him</i>. But just after Marcello has his moment of recognition and self-understanding, he drives off in a car with Giulia and their daughter. The car is strafed by a fighter plane and they are all killed: a calamity ending that's very similar to that of Moravia's other novel <i>Contempt</i> and Godard's film of it.</p>
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		<p>[11:44:56] Here, by contrast, Bertolucci leaves us with Marcello alone, as the crowd disappears. Italo has disappeared too.</p> <p>[11:45:04] Everything is now done by suggestion. The naked male prostitute on the bed winds up a gramophone...</p> <p>[11:45:15] ... and Marcello sits down with a fire behind his back and a grate of bars behind him, looking forward, away from us. The reference to Plato's cave, the fire and prisoners, is clear.</p> <p>[11:45:37] The relay of shots, with the young naked man looking up towards Marcello and Marcello turning his head can suggest that he's looking at <i>him</i>.</p> <p>[11:45:47] But he's also looking straight at the camera: in other words at <i>us</i>, the viewers, and towards the source of the light: the real world, according to Plato's allegory, or the world outside the cinema screen.</p> <p>[11:46:08] As the film cuts to black and the end titles come up we're left listening to a very haunting song. It's a recording from 1942 by the Trio Lescano, who were the real-life model for the trio we saw in the radio studio at the beginning. The lyrics connect with the images of light and shadow we've just been seeing. They say: "Shadow, you're tired and you're leaving me behind. What is it in life that you lack? Maybe you're looking for love that my heart isn't able to give you. [...] Shadow, don't get lost in the sun, which will burn your heart with its heat."</p>
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