

Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Dreamers*

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BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI'S *THE DREAMERS* (2003): POLITICS OF YOUTH REMEMBERED

Bertolucci's films have always been politically engaged. Undergoing psychoanalysis in the 1960s left him fascinated by dreams and their resemblance to cinematic sequences. However, he declared that he could not bring together his interests in politics and aesthetics.

For me it's very difficult to succeed in mixing together the idea of beauty that I have as a moral fact and a reduction of reality in political terms, exactly because I think they are two irreconcilable things. (Cited by Purdon, 1971: 7)

The Dreamers finally realised his long-standing ambition to make a film dealing with the events of Paris in 1968. Much more than a mere reconstruction of those events, this was to become the Bertolucci film that wove together sex, psychoanalysis, memory, dreaming, revolution and filmic style in a rich tapestry.

Bertolucci always wanted to make cinema new and strange to eye, ear and mind. After *Il conformista* (1970), he strove to make his films innovatory to the degree that they should attract close attention from his audiences, yet not be inaccessible. *The Dreamers*, no exception to this principle, opens on a travelling close shot of steel girders through which we are descending. This structure cannot be identified until the duration of the descent reveals it must be the Eiffel Tower. We get an angle on it quite other than what tourists enjoy when taking the view across Paris: it is made all the stranger by Jimi Hendrix's roaring music, spatially and emotionally huge, accompanying the descent.

Diverse styles attach to different sequences varying the mood and its implications. Twenty year old Matthew (Michael Pitt), a visiting Californian student, is exploring the city and leaves the Tower to attend a screening at the Cinémathèque Française. Steadicam shots follow him, revealing a wide panorama over the Seine toward his destination. However, the joyful sense of liberty that this elegant vista elicits is undercut by the camera gliding to one side to pick up police vans howling past. Soon Matthew finds his way obstructed by demonstrators, many of them, like him, students and regular members of the audience. They are protesting against the dismissal by André Malraux (President De Gaulle's Minister of Culture) of the Cinémathèque's founder Henri Langlois.

Bertolucci has placed his hero in February 1968 at a nodal point of political fermentation - right at the start of what Matthew refers to as "our very own cultural revolution." For the French youngsters around Matthew, Langlois's sacking was symptomatic of their government's autocratic ways. The young, not having lived through the occupation, lacked their parents' reverence for de Gaulle's wartime leadership. They perceived rather that social relations were not changing as in the USA and Britain where rigid hierarchy and deference were collapsing (Forbes, 1992: 15).

The government's intervention at the Cinémathèque had an inflammatory effect because Malraux failed to understand that Langlois, in screening the prints he collected, performed a key function in invigorating film culture for Parisian cinéphiles and for the young film makers of the French New Wave. Among the demonstrators outside the Cinémathèque glimpsed in *The Dreamers* were a number of cinéastes including Godard and Truffaut. They later closed down the 1968 Cannes Film Festival, by which time social unrest had intensified (French, 2004). Although Langlois had then been reinstated, the issues at stake had widened to embrace significant sectors of the labour force (Forbes, 1992: 17-18; Hayward, 1993: 237-8).

Cinémathèque programmes recovered for Parisians films which had gone out of circulation or had never reached French screens. Known for their random sequencing, Hollywood classics jostled with New Wave recent releases, French classics, German Expressionists, Italian neo-realist films, and American pot-boilers (Insdorf, 1978: 20). Thus Langlois's educational programme intensified the cultural stew that excited this new generation. Its significance was all the greater in a "pre-video, pre-DVD culture when movies did not exist outside the temple of the cinema" (Bradshaw, 2004). One ingredient was admiration for the *cinéma*

d'auteurs of American directors such as Ford, Fuller, Hawks and Ray whom French cinéphiles discovered to have distinctive personal themes. Passionate interest in charismatic American film stars added to the ferment. Other significant ingredients to the mix included love for the old masters of French cinema and contempt for 1940s and 50s translations of novels to the French screen. Above all, the 1960s were in France no less than in the Anglo-Saxon world the decade of the (commercially backed) emergence of a pervasive new youth culture, to the dismay of the parental generation. In the rich ambience of this cultural explosion, the old cinema of France was scornfully dubbed *le cinéma de papa*. Meanwhile films of the New Wave produced a rough-cut aesthetic counter to the seamless American style with eye-catching editing, handheld camera work and direct sound. Associated with the younger generation, it became known as *cinéma jeune* (Hayward, 1993: 234-5, 238).

Enthusiasm for American culture coexisted with resentment directed at US economic dominance (the market cause of the very cultural invasion French young people were enjoying). Anger was sharpened by American involvement in Vietnam and found outlet in passionate approval of the Latin American revolutionaries Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, and endorsement of Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution.

This is not only the territory that Bertolucci marks out for his French protagonists, but also the cultural milieu that stimulated the aesthetic and political concerns of his own early films.

The crowd through which Matthew weaves is being roused by passionate speeches in defence of Langlois, the Cinémathèque and Liberty. Bertolucci cuts between documentary footage of Jean-Pierre Kalfon and Jean-Pierre Léaud speaking in 1968 and shots of them delivering the self-same words to his characters. His editing dovetails today's fiction to past actuality, underlining the historic significance of the *événements* and the debt *The Dreamers* owes them.

Matthew pushes through the crowd to the museum gates. There, chained to the railings like a suffragette, he finds a striking young woman. Isabelle (Eva Green) asks him to take the cigarette from her lips because she cannot reach it. But when he asks why she is chained, she throws off the shackles with a twist of elegant wrists. If she amuses herself by dramatising the situation, the CRS riot police are not playing: they charge, clubbing anyone they can catch with needless brutality. This sets up a recurrent contrast. Matthew and his new, rebellious friends, dream altered futures and act out subtle flowerings of change. The politicians and their factors do not dream but take leaden steps to preserve the status quo.

Isabelle and her twin brother Théo (Louis Garrel) lead Matthew away from the melee and walk with him along the banks of the Seine. Friendship quickly blossoms. They share their age, eagerness for life, contempt for the tired old ways and, above all, passion for cinema. Matthew asks Isabelle when she was born and she answers, "I entered this world on the Champs Elysées in 1959, and my very first words were, 'New York Herald Tribune!'" Bertolucci cuts to Jean Seberg selling the newspaper in Godard's *A bout de souffle*. So Isabelle claims that the New Wave, rather than her parents, gave her life (Scott, 2004).

The allusion to *A bout de souffle* is not exhausted by that reading. *The Dreamers* is richly embellished with references to films and music. This early example illustrates both an aesthetic approach and some of Bertolucci's themes. *A bout de souffle* revealed the era's fascination with the collision of French and American values. It echoes throughout *The Dreamers*, as when the young people debate the relative demerits of Mao dragooning the Chinese into uniformity of thought versus America's attempt through war to impose its ideology on Vietnam. With *A bout de souffle* marking a turning point in generational culture, Bertolucci's use of archival clips, as Scott remarks, makes gloriously literal the idea that living through the movies is a mode of communion (2004). The director's love for cinema dreaming is at one with the passion of his principal characters. With the film's focus on revolution, the question is whether it propagates cultural change.

Another question *The Dreamers* poses is in what way sexual discovery will change the protagonists' personalities. As in many of Bertolucci's films, the sex drive moves characters into new ways of being - whether that drive expresses love, hatred or self-loathing. In some cases (as in *Last Tango in Paris* with Paul's death drive) it may deepen an existing urge. Elsewhere (consider Lucy in *Stealing Beauty*) sexual discovery no less than the arts frees the imagination. In *The Dreamers*, movie games lead to sex games and the film links the arts, sexuality and revolution.

The twins' father Georges (Robin Renucci) is an ineffectual figure finding refuge in his library and seldom speaking other than under his wife's tutelage. In the family he represents the *ancien régime*, on the edge of ideological extinction. But to his credit, Georges perceives that Matthew, although a naive American trying to absorb European sophistication, has a personality more interesting than his children recognise and more fully developed than theirs. An instance of Matthew's mixed immaturity and imagination is his cod explanation that true movie buffs like Théo, Isabelle and himself sit in the front row so they can be first to receive images from the screen. As Scott (2004) points out, logically this is a silly notion, not least because the Cinémathèque was devoted to showing old movies. It is also beguiling, however - less a wilful delusion than a consciously impossible metaphor expressing Matthew's romantic passion for cinema and his intuition that cinema can change the world's order.

After the twins' parents have left for a long holiday, Matthew moves in with them. As the days pass the three young dreamers become increasingly preoccupied with themselves, seldom leaving the apartment. They act out roles borrowed from the screen and challenge each other's knowledge, Bertolucci treating their seriousness tenderly. For them "the movies, far from being an escape from the world, are a means of entry into it" (Scott, 2004).

For example, Isabelle and Théo challenge Matthew to help them break the record time for running through the Louvre established in *Bande à part* (1964). Bertolucci cuts between Godard's characters and his own as they race down the galleries, the earlier film acting like a memory prompt that urges his young heroes on. The race provides: a test of Matthew; the trio's entry into a world shaped by cinema; and also a kind of thematic foreplay. Having beaten the record, the twins chant "We accept you, one of us!" Matthew joins in the victory celebrations, and Bertolucci cuts to Tod Browning's *Freaks* whose deformed characters they are imitating. The exultant friends mean that they are cinema fanatics; but, as in a dream, the quote seems to have been triggered by a preconscious idea. It will resonate fully when Matthew tries to break the psycho-sexual triangle now forming by challenging the twins to grow out of their freakishly frozen childhood.

Isabelle and Théo bear matching birthmarks on their shoulders. Théo says they are Siamese twins in their minds. During Matthew's first night in their apartment he spies on them sleeping together naked; his voyeuristic peek at this quasi-primal scene upends his neatly ordered world. But what he does not know until later is that, appearances notwithstanding, they are not lovers. In psychoanalytical terms, the twins are in an uroboric state. Natural in childhood, it becomes "freakish" in later life because the uroboros needs to be outgrown if the individual is to achieve complete adulthood.

The uroboros, a snake which lives by devouring its own tail, invokes in post-Jungian psychology the self before ego-consciousness emerges from the unconscious. As Neumann says, in one aspect it is an image of perpetuity and hence of eternity; but its circularity is primarily "the symbolic self-representation of the dawn state, showing the infancy both of mankind and of the child" (Neumann 1954: 11). It signifies "the unconscious state... the original, basic, psychic situation that is everywhere the rule" (Ibid.: 271). The uroboros, with its completeness unto itself and its closure from the outer world is, therefore, a symbol that does not convey the idea of a mature self, but rather of origins. The thrust to achieve maturity is dependent upon the evolution to the fullest capacity of consciousness, the distinguishing mark of the human species. However, the urge toward growth has to fight the psychologically fatal attraction of continued submersion in the unconscious. That attraction is great because it holds out the illusion of a safe regression to an earlier, known state, and escape from the fears which come with the enforced adventure into the developing world of consciousness (see Neumann 1954: 39-101). Matthew will eventually realise this, telling the twins they will remain locked in belated childhood unless they free each other to enjoy independent lives. Neumann points out that uroboric incest symbolism is always accompanied by the insignia of death to signify the abandonment of consciousness before it has flourished completely (Ibid.: 17). Before the end of the film Isabelle will attempt suicide and murder.

Matthew does not fully understand the twins until later. Meantime, Théo and Isabelle draw him into their "humidly close" relationship (Bradshaw, 2004), his puritanical values discomfited by their flagrant dishabille. When their games shift from movies to sex play, their psychological sadism disturbs him (Scott, 2004). Isabelle makes him reluctantly watch Théo masturbate over a photograph of Marlene Dietrich (a poster which redoubles the episode's sado-masochism). Later Théo exacts revenge when the other two fail

to recognise his pastiche of Edward G. Robinson's demise in *Scarface*. Upping the stakes, he insists that Isabelle and Matthew make love while he watches.

It is a crucial turning point. Isabelle accepts the challenge and puts Charles Trenet's *La Mer* on the turntable. She strips, helps her brother capture the mortified Matthew. They rip off his clothes discovering that he has a filched photo of her tucked under his penis. Matthew realises that further resistance would fly in the face of his obvious desire and goes to Isabelle. His motivation is clear, but Isabelle's and Théo's are less apparent, even to themselves.

As the others go to it on the kitchen floor, Théo mimics Belmondo's tough-guy demeanour. A cigarette hanging from his lip, he fries an absurd number of eggs, from time to time glancing as if indifferently at the couple. The breaking of shells counterpoints the lovemaking, Matthew, a virgin himself, unaware he is causing Isabelle pain. When they climax, noises from the street below draw Théo to the window. Pursued by the *flics*, demonstrators race past flaunting Communist flags. The juxtaposition of the mould-breaking activities within and outside the apartment cannot be missed.

When Matthew and Isabelle move apart, Théo goes to his sister, touches her thighs and with satisfaction observes blood on his fingers. Astonished to discover that he rather than Théo is Isabelle's first lover, Matthew is overwhelmed by love for her. He has yet to appreciate the political dimension of his situation in that the twins have made him their go-between, consummating the instinctual unity that they cannot quite express in the flesh.

Andrew Samuels considers the incest motif's uses (carefully distinguishing the fantasy, with which he is concerned, from the actuality) (2001: 67-8). On sibling incest, he takes as starting point an observation by Jung that it could be defined "as 'kinship libido,' a kind of instinct which, like a sheep-dog, keeps the family group intact." (Jung, 1946a: 224). In some societies, like the early Christian communities, endogamy (marriage within the family) was recognised. Kinship libido had a function in organising those communities which subsequently disappeared in the West (Ibid.: 233). According to Samuels, since exogamous marriage (i.e. outside the family) is now the cultural norm, incest fantasy has taken on a transgressive nature "that makes it a useful metaphor in developing transgressive politics" (2001: 68). The idea fits Bertolucci's themes in *The Dreamers* where the trio seem revolutionary in refashioning sexual mores in their private microcosm and as such are juxtaposed with the political *événements* unfolding in the city.

At first new love and vigorous physical appetite focus Isabelle on Matthew to the exclusion of Théo. But soon the twins' psychological sadism resumes. Théo warns Matthew not to get in the way of love between himself and his sister, conjoined as they are in the psyche. Since Isabelle does not demur, the strongest current of libido swings away from the Matthew-Isabelle axis and returns to its former alignment between Théo and Isabelle. Although it will take him some while to mount a challenge, Matthew knows he has a rival.

In the meantime, pushed into cooking by Théo, Isabelle serves up a couple of appalling casseroles. Perhaps this twenty-year old Parisienne truly has no idea how to prepare food, but possibly, as the woman at the fulcrum of a *ménage-à-trois*, she is mocking the forms of patriarchal marriage. With the house empty of food, Théo next mocks the hunter-gatherer's role by collecting neighbours' garbage and serving it as lunch. Whilst their domestic scene disrupts the patriarchal order by which the twins' parents live, it resembles life in the city where food shortages were being experienced as nervous housewives hoarded supplies. In the apartment, however, shortages occur because the cheques left by the parents have all been spent - apparently on wine and dope.

Despite the fact that, to the annoyance of his student friends, Théo is no longer helping organise demonstrations at the university, politics do enter the apartment in dope-fuelled arguments. When Théo proclaims that Mao is no tyrant but resembles a great filmmaker in directing his people to march together, Matthew responds that, since Mao's foot soldiers are all required to devote themselves to the same single text, it leads to death of the imagination. The boys also argue fiercely about Vietnam. Théo is angered both by the American armed intervention and, contradictorily, that Matthew has avoided being drafted by enrolling at university. Matthew insists that pacifism is no excuse from the draft. Besides, if Théo's radical politics matter so much, why does he not take part in the street manifestations?

Politics, film aesthetics and psychology have come together again and remain interlocked when Matthew insists Théo is mistaken to think American GIs listen to Clapton. Hendrix is the man, his greatness that he plays fucked up music for a fucked up time. The boys' rising anger is driven by jealousy, as the track behind their argument, Hendrix's *Hey Joe*, emphasises - a lover prepares to gun down his woman for taking another guy. When Matthew complains that the twins don't love him as much as he does them, Isabelle challenges him to prove his love. He accepts eagerly not caring that she is demanding the reverse of what he wanted. But when the twins start testing him by shaving his pubic hair, he is outraged: "You're trying to turn me into a freak. 'One of us, one of us, one of us.'" The incident unsettles Isabelle because it quotes a much loved film and Matthew urges them to let go of each other if they are to grow into adulthood. He challenges Isabelle to go out with him alone.

Isabelle accepts. She and Matthew enjoy a date at the Cinémathèque, a success. Back in the apartment Matthew overcomes Isabelle's reluctance to let him into her room, previously off limits. When Matthew does charm his way in, the room reveals a personality less mature than her sophisticated mask. The decor is a pastiche of sentimental Regency. Remembrances of childhood (a twinned pair of teddies) sit alongside materials for the study of anatomy. Nothing about the room would arouse her mother's anxiety, so it could hardly be more different from Théo's, whose icons declare his rebellion.

Isabelle's admitting her lover looks like a promising move toward adulthood. She comes to him as Venus de Milo in long black gloves which cut her arms from view. When Matthew correctly identifies the statue (a loving gift as a quiz question), she rewards him sexily. But Théo, in the next room with a girl whose giggles reveal that they too are sexually excited, puts *La Mer* on the record player - his revenge for exclusion from the date with Matthew. For the twins, *La Mer* has never been an instrument of seduction but their love song. It fits with their uroboric unity: compared with Janis Joplin, Hendrix and The Doors, it is *musique de papa*. The ocean has long been associated with the deeps of the unconscious: life forms there; images within it can only be seen, when at all, fleetingly metamorphosing; and it drowns those who become lost in it. By playing the tune while fucking another girl, Théo cold-bloodedly violates the bond with Isabelle. Like a person drowning as the music sucks her directly back into the uroboric oceanic state which her brother is poisoning, Isabelle ejects Matthew like a stranger. All the while she beats helplessly on the door to her brother's room with hands still clad in the other girl's deathly black gloves.

A deep need to save the uroboros now dominates Isabelle and while the boys resume their drunken verbal jousting, she constructs a tent in the salon from bed linen and cushions. Théo recognises it as a luminous, candle-lit recreation of a childhood fantasy palace. Ecstatic, the boys rush into it, but the wine soon induces sleep. When certain that Matthew cannot overhear, Isabelle prods her inebriated brother into half wakefulness, asking urgently for reassurance that he will love her forever. But Théo only mutters "I love you too" which hurts by echoing their coolness to Matthew. Desperate, not least because Matthew has called them freaks, Isabelle is left struggling for breath, on the brink of trauma.

In the morning, the twins' parents return to discover the three sleepers naked and entwined - the young bodies casually exposed as in a voluptuous painting of nudes by Ingres. The night must have brought them love, all three, whether awake or not, and whether in the flesh or spirit alone. Georges, shocked beyond speech by the sight, cannot decide what to do. His wife sees that waking the trio would be calamitous and manages her husband back to the car after leaving another cheque. Their departure is a political defeat within the family. The young have usurped the domestic *ancien régime* by cultural shock tactics and without a struggle - an inexact miniature of what is transpiring on the streets.

Isabelle awakens first and finds the cheque placed where her parents could not have avoided seeing into the tent. She has always been deeply disquieted by thoughts of them discovering her feelings for her brother. Now she rushes round the apartment making sure they have left, and her eye falls on the gas supply. Fixing a hose to the outlet, she pulls it through to the tent and lies down between the sleeping boys. Clutching its hissing mouth to her bosom like Cleopatra's asp and unchecked by the thought that she will kill Théo and Matthew, she prepares to die. Even though her preparations are self-dramatising, her actions vindicate Neumann's observation that insignia of death accompany incest symbolism, signifying the abandonment of consciousness before it has flourished completely (1954: 17).

After a long hissing silence, a gathering brouhaha heralds the passage of demonstrators below the apartment.

A cobblestone smashes through the window and rousts the young people from the tent's womb. Noise and air flood the apartment. Isabelle throws windows open and conceals the hose. When the others ask what has happened, she says, "The street came flying into the room!" This curious formulation does more than reinforce Isabelle's dramatising penchant: it draws attention to its metaphoric undertow. Those on the street are in effect calling on the trio to affirm their solidarity, and with it the life of consciousness, by rejoining the would-be revolutionaries. The friends dress and race downstairs, thrilled by the unexpected summons. On the street, they are swept into an enormous crowd, far bigger than any previous march. By May 1968, as Jill Forbes notes, the popular base of the *événements* had widened to embrace large numbers of workers aggrieved by poor wages, antiquated industrial management and authoritarian labour relations (1992: 15). The three friends move forward taking up the chant calling others to turn out in solidarity.

Macro and micro political events are entwined to the end. The trio's break-up (the domestic *événement*) is brought about by another of Théo's stratagems. He challenges the others to go forward with him and hurl Molotov cocktails at the CRS. He may be responding to Matthew's charge that he fails to act on his radical ideals; but he also knows that the pacifist Matthew will not riot, whereas his sister cannot resist dramatising herself. His challenge is a device to reclaim Isabelle and sever her from Matthew, and it succeeds. Defying Matthew's arguments for reason and love, Théo grabs his sister's arm, runs forward with her and takes shelter behind an improvised barricade before lighting and tossing his bottle. Matthew has time only to turn back through the mass of demonstrators before, silhouetted against the flames, the heavily armed CRS charge forward, overwhelming the camera and the crowd. Our three young protagonists are lost among the marchers, themselves also dreamers envisioning the birth of a new social order.

Matthew's rejection by the twins brings his personal journey to a turning point. It can be mapped onto the archetypal mythic and psychological quest of the hero. That classic adventure starts with separation from the individual's familiar milieu. For Matthew, quitting San Diego for Paris, the move is geographical, cultural and spiritual. The aspirant undergoes trials and conflict at the risk of injury or death. The events in the apartment conform to this pattern even though they occur between intimates. Should the candidate succeed, he or she will have undergone transformation at a deep level, and there can be no doubting this of Matthew. Formerly his mother's son, a clever, innocent and puritanical boy, the joy and suffering of love for Isabelle and Théo have changed him into a well-rounded man with strong moral convictions based on lived experience. Although his refusal to hurl firebombs does not conform to the behaviour of mainstream action movie heroes, his confident assertion of what he knows to be right reveals the inner metamorphosis that has taken place. Eventually, like the archetypal hero, Matthew will return home, taking with him the self-knowledge gained from his journey.

The twins, however, are still living in their family milieu. Although the parents' departure does free them to explore their sexuality, separation from their prior circumstances is only partial. They devise almost all the tests, the underlying dynamic of which strengthens their psychologically incestuous union. They are in command, whereas Matthew undergoes trials forced on him. Only after Matthew has become Isabelle's lover and challenges the twins to divide, do they face conflict: Isabelle a conflict of desires, Théo a fight for control. As we saw, they refuse the separation that would break them out of the uroboric state. So if Isabelle and Théo change psychologically, it is only by ending more intensely what they always were.

They, therefore, do not make the heroic psychological journey. Yet Théo makes the film's only action-movie heroic gesture, an all-or-nothing dash to the barricades. Given that he is toting a Molotov cocktail and the CRS are armed with riot guns, it is a quasi-suicidal act. As a personal statement, it underlines the twins' refusal to change, no matter what the consequences. However, their actions also have a political dimension. By joining the rioting, the twins contribute to bringing down the old regime. Samuels's discussion of siblings, lets us see their activism as symbolising a redistribution of power. Siblings provide an image that stands for a certain kind of politics in society at large. In this, horizontal relationships (of the kind nurtured between siblings when in opposing parents they develop radical new ideas co-operatively) challenge vertical relationships with authority (the child's struggle against parental power).

In their ineluctable resistance to parental and societal authority, siblings speak for a decentralized style of leadership that eschews the erection of authority figures... (Samuels, 2001: 98)

This is the structure underpinning the dynamics of the societal struggle in *The Dreamers* which can undercut

or reduce emphasis on the "heroic leadership" of a lionised patriarch. It can lead to a politics in which the partners educate each other and a beneficial fluidity of policy-making results. In practice, however, such leadership usually fails in political terms because siblings grow up and become the parents, losing their radical edge (Ibid.: 99). The history of French government since the 1970s confirms the acuity of this insight and the accuracy with which Bertolucci positioned Théo and Isabelle in the psychological nexus between the personal (sexual) and the public (political).

What was the impact of the *événements* on France? Agreements and laws were put in place which provided for pay increases, greater recognition of trade union rights, participatory management and reforms of higher education. Although the political consequences were not immediate and were produced by a wider set of circumstances, the death of Gaullism and the rebirth of the left can indirectly be attributed to the Events of May 1968 [which] led to a questioning of the exercise of power in society. They revealed the possibility that power structures could change and that political activity could alter human relations... (Forbes, 1992: 16)

All this and its international dimension (since it was also a year of high-profile anti-war protests in America) excited Bertolucci about 1968. He wanted *The Dreamers* to offer "a message of hope to the youth of today. There's a big difference between then and now. In 1968 there was a perception of the future, an assumption that the world could get better and that you'd be a part of that. Today that's not the case." (Bertolucci cited by Brooks, 2004)

To achieve his political goal, *The Dreamers* would at least have had to dramatise the Events more fully, giving today's young audiences opportunities to feel the urgent motivation driving those who took to the streets. As it is, the film offers only glimpses of the manifestations - too little for those who do not know the history of 1968 to take their significance. Therefore the film communicated more effectively with the generation represented on screen, people in their fifties and sixties, because in 1968 the dreams and voices of the young made themselves felt on campuses across Europe and the USA in ways not previously known.

Bertolucci seems not to have been aware that the young in the early twenty-first century - certainly in the UK and USA - pay scant attention to the political history of their parents' and grandparents' eras. They know little of 1960s cinema and nothing of the European New Wave that Bertolucci celebrates so lovingly. It might have helped the young audience engage with his political themes if he had found a way of referring to demonstrations against the second war in Iraq - a burning issue which only months before release of *The Dreamers* had aroused not only the young but their parents too. Then it might have pointed a clear direction for its time. That it did not was particularly sad in a period of history when governments claiming to be the moral leaders of the western world had, on the most favourable assessment, been guilty of appalling judgement in invading Iraq. In the all too probable worst case, they had lied, deceived and misled their peoples. The moral force of what was achieved in 1968 could indeed have offered a message of renewal.

Bertolucci, taking command of the material and revising Gilbert Adair's novel to fulfil his vision for the screen, is the first and last dreamer here (Brooks, 2004). In *The Dreamers* he finally resolved the conundrum he had cogitated on more than thirty years earlier and directed a film which weaves together sex, psychoanalysis, dreaming, politics (albeit primarily a personal politics) and cinema. The film's aesthetics pattern that weave. The gliding Steadicam produces a mysterious way of moving as if on wings, an often dream-like effect (Bertolucci in Thompson, 2003). Such shots tend to show objects in the world around the characters sliding into and slipping out of the frame. In the apartment they make the relationship between characters and place organic, as Bertolucci intended, turning the rooms into a sort of character (Ibid.), and linking actuality and dream. In addition, the Steadicam's gliding throughout much of the film expresses Bertolucci's desire to attempt a fusion between the screen and his audience to mirror that which his protagonists felt at the Cinémathèque (Ibid.)

Mise-en-scène develops the political aspect: the contrast between Théo's room, its posters tacked over torn wallpaper, and the genteel decor of the other rooms projects the conflict between generations into the narrative after the parents have decamped. And the increasing seediness of the apartment signals the shift in power between old and young.

The clips of films and music tracks intercut throughout *The Dreamers* affect the mood and anticipate or echo plot developments. Some have a playful function (*Bande À part* and *Queen Christina*); some are

elegiac (*A bout de souffle* and Françoise Hardy's *Tous les garçons et les filles*); others are sombre (suicide in *Mouchette*) and several have a menacing undertow (*Shock Corridor*, Jimi Hendrix's *Third Stone from the Sun* and *Freaks*).

All these factors, and the passionate wit of *The Dreamers* make it impossible to doubt Bertolucci's authorial presence. The ambivalent values of the clips enhance rather than detract from this presence, enriching a characteristic that pervades the film. Ambivalence produces the sense that Bertolucci has (to adapt Jung's term) circumambulated his material perusing it from a variety of perspectives. In the personal drama we see the three young people as both mature and childish, gorgeous and slovenly, intelligent and naive. We view them both tenderly and with amusement. In the political domain, replaying the fiery speeches of 68 gives us a lived sense of history through documentary footage. But it also blunts Kalfon's and Léaud's edge by showing them as comfortable bourgeois figures in 2003.

Bertolucci's overarching vision offers perspectives on the characters and *événements* from a variety of points of view, holding opposites in tension. Notwithstanding the substantial contributions of Adair, cast and crew, it bears (appropriately for a film that celebrates the New Wave) the stamp of a passionate, thinking authorial personality. That personality seems to me to have the qualities of a wise old man. An archetypal figure which Jung found surfacing when guidance is needed, the wise old person points to the future by bringing meaning out of bewildering confusion (1948: 217-20). The sense that this figure is energised is particularly interesting given that Bertolucci had lost his own father three years before the release of *The Dreamers*.

"...having a father who is 90 means that you are still in the position of being the son. Then he dies and you grow up, and already you are an old man. So I feel as though I have gone straight from adolescence to old age without ever being an adult." (Bertolucci cited in Brooks, 2004)

In *The Dreamers* the wise old man has overseen a therapeutic process of anamnesis (recovery into memory) of material that had once been conscious and later lapsed (Jung, 1946b, 95-6). If the film is read as representing the psychological self-exploration of the auteur as wise old man, anamnesis of 1968 suggests that the parents' departure complements the reframing (albeit regretful) of incest fantasies. They are now set in a wider context where uroboric attachments, however seductive their invitation to resist the world into which the young adult must move, can be recognised as, even for an artist, a potentially injurious entrapment. Recognition of the demerits of the twins' uroboric interdependency vis-à-vis Matthew's new, albeit painful, self-sufficiency represents a major step toward individuation - and vindicates the sense that the wise old man as auteur has been productively invoked.

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