

1968: A Global Perspective

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Bertolucci's *The Dreamers* (2003): Memories of 1968

This presentation will address Bertolucci's 2003 *The Dreamers* as a portrayal of the "revolutionary character" of 1968 -- as an exploration of that year in personal and abstract terms, rather than as a failed attempt at achieving social/political progress.

To make this case, I will first discuss how Bertolucci edits the historical Paris May 1968 to fit within his cinematic program. Bertolucci engages '68 as an auteur via the inclusion of news reels and the condensation of historical events. Bertolucci's interaction with the past does not attempt to nor amount to a replication of the past like his earlier historical epic "Novecento." Rather, Bertolucci uses these modified visual recollections to evoke the spirit of the time rather than true history. Likewise, Bertolucci uses film clips to evoke response within the narrative. In fact, *The Dreamers* is more a history of film than a history of Mai '68. The films cited by Bertolucci serve two purposes: to further develop the film's protagonists (like *Freaks*) and to draw a direct line from revolutionary spirit in film to revolutionary action in life (like *Breathless*).

I conclude that the purpose of Bertolucci's re-visitation of May '68 is to distinguish between the tangible spirit of the time (even as it exists here within a vacuum, away from the university and the streets of Paris) and the ambiguous if not failed results gained through the demonstrations, riots, etc. Bertolucci then posits that the feeling and atmosphere of '68 was - like film's relation to recorded history - truer than the series of events that physically occurred.