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To whom it may concern

The work of Dr. Alessandro Marini, submitted for achieving the 'habilitace', is entirely focused on a fairly well-known masterpiece of Italian film history, i.e. *Prima della rivoluzione* (Before the Revolution, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1964). The second work of renowned film director Bernardo Bertolucci is thoroughly scrutinized in this sound work, through a pivotal lens and some assumptions in terms of method.

The lens Dr. Marini recurs to survey Bertolucci's work is its relationship with a literary source, that is Stendhal's novel *La Chartreuse de Parme* (The Charterhouse of Parma, 1839). The methodological assumptions Marini founds his work upon are: textual analysis, intertextual and intersemiotic relationships, an auteurist reading of the work, as a pace on a relatively consistent pathway, and the notion of 'anxiety of influence', as literary critic Harold Bloom coined it.

Film criticism already gestured at the relationship of *Before the Revolution* with *The Charterhouse of Parma*; that being said, Dr. Marini inquires in detail the complex articulation of said reference for the cinematic artwork, beyond the most blatant evidence, i.e. the replication of the characters' names. As the first chapter adequately illustrates (*Stendhal a Parma, nel 1962*), Bertolucci capitalizes on one of the major novels of European 19th century as a way to speak his own voice, while standing on the shoulders of previous giants. Marini examines how the film articulates its characters and mutual connections, the relationship of the main character Fabrizio with History, the description of the city, and the issues of autobiography and class-belonging against the background of *The Charterhouse of Parma*. The painstaking analysis is not solely limited to adaptation studies, thus inquiring the grade of accuracy or betrayal of the film's literary source; rather, the scholar attempts at describing the reasons for adapting Stendhal's work – e.g.: the crucial theme of social classes and transformation; or the controversial relationship of the protagonist with History. Accordingly, the alteration of sections, actions, events is a good token of Bertolucci's autonomy and an explanation of the articulation of his own voice. Furthermore, the cinematic work adjusts its literary source and



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political and cultural aims to an entirely new scenario; consequently, Marini foregrounds the translation of past issues, as the one mentioned above, with brand new conceptual frameworks, such as non-orthodox Marxism (e.g. Herbert Marcuse, Wilhelm Reich), or the crisis of hegemonic styles of representation (e.g. Neorealism).

The second chapter (*Proemio ed epilogo, ovvero lo spazio programmatico dell'ambiguità*) tackles the two thresholds of the film, i.e. its beginning and ending, through its intertextual references, respectively Pier Paolo Pasolini and Hermann Melville. Thanks to a remarkably close analysis of the film, its quotations, and the role said quotations play within the film's textual system, Marini clarifies the dynamics of intertextuality in Bertolucci's poetics. In fact, these references contribute at moulding both the film and the author's ideology.

The third chapter showcases another crucial concern of the film and of the scholarly inquiry, too: the representation of space. Marini accordingly explores in detail two major spatial representation within *Before the Revolution*: the Nature and the City, and their respective association to a set of cultural, ideological, and representational values. By collating the former, again, with Stendhal's work, and through a deep scrutiny of the latter, the scholar carries on his hermeneutic approach to the film.

The final chapter deals with a subject of paramount importance in the film and in whole its author's career, i.e. representation. A number of different setting (theatre, rallies) or modes of address evoke a formal and theoretical reflection the film originates on the very act of staging: a strategy Bertolucci will further replicate in many of his later works (e.g. *Strategia del ragno*; *Il conformista*; *Novecento* etc.). Moreover, this strategy, which in this and later films relies on Verdi's melodramas, heralds both a regional and national glory, and acts as a cultural strategy, and a film tradition, i.e. Visconti's previous reference to Giuseppe Verdi in *Senso* (1954).

In terms of bibliographical references and conceptual framework, the work of Dr. Alessandro Marini proves to be correct and consistent: while it downplays or simply overlooks all the cultural implications of the film's intertextual references, in terms of a politics of identity, or a positioning of the work within a broader cultural and political arena, the literature helps the author to build a fairly sound argument in terms of hermeneutics. As such, whereas the study



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is not particularly fresh – most of the literature is either made of film criticism, or quite general studies (e.g.: Bloom, Casetti, Eco, Heath/De Lauretis), nevertheless, it achieves its aim of closely analysing Bertolucci's work and providing a sound explanation for its highly refined structure. Among the weaknesses of the work are, therefore, a not fully updated theoretical framework, and a limited number of primary sources; in fact, a broader reliance on archival materials and contemporary film criticism, testifying for the film's reception, might have shed a brighter light on the artwork's genesis and its location against the grid of contemporary cultural system. Among its major, undisputable strengths are a very consistent argument and bright interpretation of the film, in its inner dynamics and in its reliance on a very intricate web of intertextual palimpsests. Whereas intertextuality and artistic influence are not the heyday of contemporary debate, nonetheless Dr. Marini's work makes a very aware, coherent, and sound use of these notions in clarifying Bertolucci's work hermeneutics, thus providing its readership with a fresh approach to a milestone in the Italian and world film history.

For the sum of these reasons I believe this work meets the requirements for the 'habilitace'.

Kind regards

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