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he was grateful to her for legitimizing *Last Tango in Paris* at a time when it was being given the *Salo* treatment in many quarters. And so we poor provincial New Yorkers may never see the version of *1900* that the cosmopolitan congregation of Cannes was privileged to witness last year. I wish I could fake a few tears for the occasion but I am afraid that the cut *1900* fails to arouse in me any desire to see the original version. For one thing, I have had it up to here with Bertolucci's cavalier attitude toward reviewers and moviegoers, with his quaint habit of cutting his films long after they have been released. He has done this, to my knowledge, with *Before the Revolution*, *The Conformist*, and *Last Tango*, and I am sick of it. At a certain point a film should be completed and inviolate. I have always defended the integrity of the print against producers, censors, distributors, and television manglers. But when the artist himself keeps playing around with the print long after everyone has pontificated about it the situation becomes hopeless. It may seem naive on my part but I have always championed the right of my most far-flung reader to see the same version of a film that I saw for my review.

Ironically, Pauline Kael's reported attempt to "protect" De Niro's performance may have backfired in that his English-language performance in *1900* must be considered a setback to his career. I do not blame De Niro particularly. Bertolucci obviously instructed him to improvise as freely as Brando had been allowed to do in *Last Tango*. With Brando it did not make much difference, since he had been cast as a crazy American expatriate in Paris, and who can tell for sure what a crazy American expatriate will say or do at any given moment? Brando could have stood on his head and whistled *Dixie* without betraying his characterization in any way. Unfortunately, De Niro is supposed to be the weak, indecisive, sexually unresolved son of a wealthy landowner, and his smart-ass Americanisms only break up the lyrical flow of Bertolucci's soulful technique. Still, the De Niro character is crucial to Bertolucci's conception of himself as a guilt-ridden bourgeois with vaguely leftist leanings. The peasant hero played by Gerard Depardieu is presumably what Bertolucci/De Niro aspire to be. They grow up together, roll around in the hay together, play with their little ding-dongs together, and when they grow up, have their big ding-dongs serviced at the same time by the same whore. This scene is far raunchier than anything in Pasolini's much-scorned *Salo*, and yet everyone seems to be afraid to denounce Bertolucci out of hand. He is panned with reluctance, mostly for the

alleged cartoonish simplicity of his politics.

People have been telling me for over a year that the first half of the film is good, but that the second half degenerates into a Marxist tract. I have been told also that the shorter version leaves out none of the episodes from the longer version, but merely trims each sequence. One and a half hours is some trim, and, if true, what a fatty film *1900* must have been. Nonetheless, the whole film strikes me as political. Where the second half goes off the track is in Bertolucci's facile equation of sadomasochism with fascism—an equation he has studied in the math class of his late mentor, Pier Paolo Pasolini. But to the end Pasolini remained coolly detached from the most debased spectacles. Bertolucci, by contrast, records his own hysteria in the creative process. Perhaps people forgive Bertolucci everything because of his seeming delirium, while they forgive Pasolini nothing because of his seeming sobriety.

In any event, *1900* strains as much to be a Freudian epic as a Marxist epic, and it simply does not work on either level. Visconti's *Rocco and His Brothers* covered much the same terrain over 15 years ago, and Visconti's *The Damned* initiated the homosexual chic of Nazism. The look and sound (thanks to Ennio Morricone's evocative score) recall Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West*, and there are intimations in the end of Jancso. With all that is borrowed and blue in *1900* there is surprisingly little that is new. Even the excremental expressionism reeks less of Pasolini than of vintage Ken Russell (vide the jail scene in *Valentino*).

Perhaps what the early word-of-mouth really meant was that all the good performances—Sterling Hayden and Burt Lancaster as the two patriarchs, Stefania Sandrelli as the wife and corevolutionist of Depardieu's peasant hero—are crammed into the first half of the film. The farther we get from the nostalgia of *1900* and the closer we get to the furor of the '20s and '30s and '40s, the more disastrous (De Niro, Dominique Sanda, Donald Sutherland) to the disappointing (Depardieu, Larua Betti, Alida Valli). There is much more to say about *1900*, and I will say it when the film opens commercially, or before if I am so moved. I have the feeling that Bertolucci has allowed himself to be subjected to many cultural influences. I suspect, for example, that Bertolucci took to heart Norman Mailer's critique (in *The New York Times Book Review*) of Brando's relative modesty vis à vis Maria Schneider in *Last Tango*, and thus subsequently made his two male stars let it all hang out, in a manner of speaking.

Bernardo Bertolucci's *1900* has been eagerly awaited ever since it premiered at the 1976 Cannes Film Festival. Originally it was five and a half hours long, then it was cut to five hours, and now it is down to four hours and five minutes. There were negotiations underway in 1976 to show the uncut Italian-language version at that year's New York Film Festival. I have been told that Pauline Kael vetoed the idea because she wanted Robert De Niro's performance to be "protected" by the release of the English-language version. Bertolucci understandably acceded to her wishes because