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in the Tavianis' next film, *Sotto il Segno dello Scorpione*, depicting the evacuation from a volcanic island of a party of young revolutionary refugees. They land on another island, where a hierarchy exists: the community comprises farmers who coexist under a former revolutionary, Renno, now self-styled king of the community. This island, too, is volcanic, and the 'Scorpionists' try to persuade the residents to depart with them for the mainland. Their failure to persuade the residents to fall into line with their hopes for solidarity leads the Scorpionists into a frenzy of violence, in which the women are raped and the men massacred before they depart for the mainland.

Like Comolli's Franco-Italian co-production, *La Cecilia*, *Scorpio* raises the crucial question all those with an utopian predisposition need to ask themselves: is non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian communality feasible in practice? Like Comolli, the Tavianis seem pessimistic. In *La Cecilia*, a group of Italian anarchists settle in the Latin-American jungle, having been granted land there by the Emperor of Brazil. Their attempt to run a self-sufficiency commune along anarchist principles fails because the theorist of the group, an intellectual named Rossi, fails to bridge the gap between his ideas and the working model, the land itself, retreating into a solipsistic reverence for his own grand design, ignoring the problem of dissension which divides the haves from the have-nots within the homestead. Finally, the group faces conscription into the new Republic's Army or deportation to Italy. They do not solve this ticklish problem so much as evade it, singing more marching songs as they stage a scene from *The Death of Danton*.

Where Comolli's film has the edge over the Tavianis' *Scorpio* is in the first-rate script, to which Eduardo de Gregorio contributed. *La Cecilia*, less content with rhetorical gestures (it was made in the mid-Seventies), gains in an authentic analytical focus, showing, not a collapse into frustrated frenzy, but instead the highly plausible conflicts which develop. Comolli's film also gains in subtlety by suggesting the glancing moments when the commune is almost working.

Scorpio, conversely, presents a very hostile environment, a terrain of dead lava and potential earthquakes. What both films do signal, however, is the dependence of the respective groups on communal rituals to bolster their ailing morale; both films show the communards singing, dancing and rehearsing theatre spectacles. Both communities stereotype themselves by over-reaction.

From the group dream of utopia to that of the solitary activist. This is the shift of focus *San Michele Aveva un Gallo* offers. The film is loosely based on a story by Tolstoy, and the brothers have described the film as a 'symphony in three movements, corresponding to the three seasons of life, youth, maturity and old age'. The hero is Giulio Manieri, who, taking his campaign of anarchist propaganda into Umbria, is met with indifference from the peasants and hostility from the authorities and spends ten years in prison, under sentence of death. During his years in prison Giulio develops a full, not to say florid interior life, projecting scenes from childhood, fantasies,

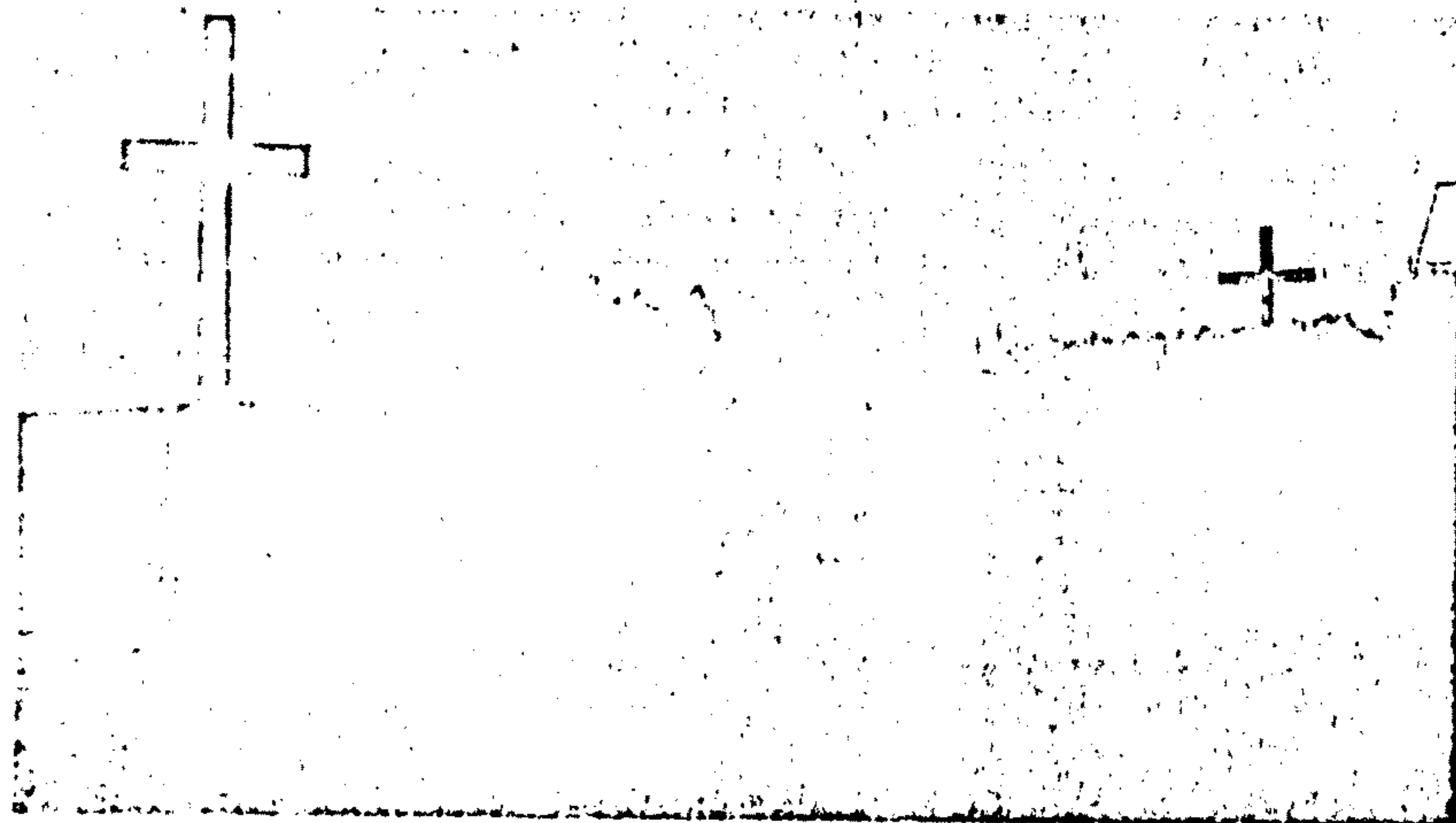
and figments of his own death by drowning onto the walls of the cell. Like Salvatore in *Un Uomo da Bruciare*, he is a man whose messianic vision of political upheaval serves to isolate him from any real awareness of the needs of ordinary people.

In the third part of the film, Giulio is taken away by boat across a lake. His boat passes another, filled with younger socialists with whom he strikes up a dialogue, only to realize that they consider his political ideas out-moded. This shift from the libertarian anarchism of the 1880s to the birth of more organized ideas of socialist collective action is also a prominent theme in Bolognini's *Metello*, set in the same period. Oddly enough, Giulio shares the same death by drowning as *Metello*'s 'out-moded' anarchist father in that movie, though Giulio's death in the lake is self-inflicted. Unable to bear the idea that he is less than politically relevant, he plunges into the water.

The Tavianis have described their hero as being a man who nurtures 'a neurotic impatience with the concept of family ... family appears to him as a form of balance. "It is this balance," he says, "which creates monsters." The only sexual relationship to which Giulio alludes is with a prostitute.' Giulio raises psychological questions which are only developed fully in the Tavianis' next film, *Allonsanfan*. In this, the brothers tackle more extensively the difficult questions their previous films have raised, but hedge them rather less behind façades of rhetoric and militant gesture. Fulvio, the hero, is a later model of Giulio, sharing the bourgeois background and the revolutionary fervour. Unlike Giulio, though, he is a man who has lost his ideals and now seeks to promote his own interests, only to find that the residues of his former life as a subversive activist cannot be shed so readily.

It seems plausible to argue that *Allonsanfan* is the first film of mature perception in the Tavianis' repertoire, in the sense that it confronts the complexities of moral ambiguity. *Allonsanfan* is the most intriguing film the Tavianis have made, since it contains a paradox: it is set resoundingly in the past – the period of Restoration following the Napoleonic changes of the 1800s – yet it is cunningly contemporary in its main theme. *Allonsanfan* is a film about the failure of revolutionary commitment. As *San Michele Aveva un Gallo* ends with Giulio's suicide in the lake, so *Allonsanfan* begins, resuming Giulio's story, but with a different line to pursue. Fulvio is released from prison in 1816. As he walks down the steps he is birched by guards. We learn that the Governor has released him in the expectation that Fulvio will lead the authorities to the revolutionaries he once knew as the Divine Brethren.

Fulvio does indeed meet up with the Divine Brethren. As he rounds a corner, he is whisked into a handcart by several Brethren disguised as monks and trundled to the edge of a lake. Unlike Giulio, however, his immersion in the waters is ceremonial not mortal. As the Brethren, under the nominal leadership of Tito, dip Fulvio they interrogate him. Has he betrayed the cause? Fulvio denies that he has. Tito decides to trust him. This absence of guile on Tito's part is characteristic.



The peasant uprising in *Allonsanfan*

Fulvio goes with the Brethren to the house where they expect to meet up with their leader, Philippe. He is dead when they arrive, hanging from a wisteria branch. A suicide note is pinned to his body. Fulvio finds himself unable to react as expected. He wants to go home to find out what has happened to his family. Tito says he will go with him. En route he tries to convince Fulvio that a retreat into the family situation is not realistic. Fulvio's family, being upper-class bourgeois, represents vested interests. Their ideas will inevitably conflict with Fulvio's. They will probably turn him in. Fulvio is not sure. He decides to enter the house disguised as a monk. Tito says he will wait outside for him.

Thus begins Fulvio's realignment with his social roots rather than his acquired political convictions. In the grounds he hears his name being called, by his sister Esther (Laura Betti), by his former nanny, and by his sister-in-law. He realizes that the Fulvio being summoned is his nephew, a handsome child who is playing in the garden.

Fulvio carries off his disguise by saying that he brings news of Fulvio, and joins the family group for dinner. As he retires he decides to test the family feelings towards himself, and announces, in his role as monk, that Fulvio is dead. The reaction of the family is one of stunned grief. Fulvio unmask; his brother and sister run to embrace him. Fulvio, overwhelmed by intense emotion, collapses.

In the first phase of Fulvio's isolation in the bedroom of his childhood he lies in fever, the walls around him glowing dully golden, in keeping with the subconscious identifications he formed as a child in this room. Fulvio

lies still, watching the cat, in a house which has become mysteriously silent (the nanny has even ordered the gardener to muffle the cockerel). At night he passes a candle round the familiar mementoes, glimpsing the books, the violin, and the painting of the *Mayflower* – America still remains a powerful escapist dream for Fulvio, we later realize.

The second phase of the sequence shows the end of fatigue and stasis, and is predominantly white, as his former nanny bathes him in the sheets and notes his erection with a nanny's matter of factness. 'You're getting better, sir,' she tells him. Fulvio is ready to rise and face the deep confusions of his life. 'Make me look nice,' he orders his barber as he absorbs the vista from his balcony.

The final phase of Fulvio's incorporation into his family occurs when he leaves the sick-room for the terrace below, where he sits, wearing his favourite gold scarf, next to his sister. Esther celebrates the 'restoration' of Fulvio by bursting into song – the 'dirindindin' which they used to sing in childhood. This song, which the Taviani have described as 'full of seductive negativity', is balanced later in the film by the 'saltarello' danced by the Brethren, which is far from seductive but is expressive of more positive emotion. During Esther's song, Charlotte, Fulvio's ex-mistress, arrives. Fulvio goes to embrace her. She has never met his family and is also a member of the Brethren. She insults his family in Hungarian while smiling at them sweetly through the introductions, and as soon as she is alone with Fulvio, makes two demands which he cannot meet. She wants to make love; and she wants him to sell jewels to raise funds for the Brethren. With arms, she says, they can head south where the peasants are already in revolt and conditions thus favour the insurrectionary dreams of the Brethren. Fulvio's plan is more prosaic. He wants them to collect their son Massimiliano, at present being boarded out, and flee *à trois* to America. Charlotte up-ends her supper tray in anger at his weakness. But Fulvio's dream of peaceful escape is already shattered. Through the window he sees the Brethren coming across the grounds, disguised as a hunting party.

At this moment Fulvio's reactions become wholly unequivocal. 'Why have you come to take me away?' he mutters, addressing the Brethren while they remain out of earshot. 'You've been at it for twenty years, chasing ideals that are tired habits. You should have drowned me. I like it here, where everyone knows me. I've lost faith.' One Brother in particular he singles out for his invective, as he ambles into the ambush with the look of a dreamer not a hunter. 'You'll trip,' sneers Fulvio. 'I can't stand the way your eyes always look towards the future.' Esther interrupts him; she has turned in the Brethren. Having overheard his conversation with Charlotte she guessed they would come to collect Fulvio. Faced with a brutal choice – should he warn his former allies or remain in sequestered comfort? – Fulvio vacillates. 'I'll count to ten, then warn them.'

But it is Charlotte who takes the initiative, and runs to warn the Brethren. She is shot down by a soldier. The grounds become a scene of carnage, dogs

yapping between the warriors, Charlotte crawling badly wounded towards a carriage. Fulvio and Esther lurk indoors, the curtains drawn, while the battle rages, but finally the sight of Charlotte in physical distress is too much for Fulvio. He helps her into a carriage, grabs his nephew as a hostage and they make their escape. Esther chasing them with a whip.

Once clear, Fulvio releases Fulvio Junior, donating his gold scarf to the child, and he and Charlotte drive to pick up Massimiliano from his foster-parents. There, Charlotte dies. Fulvio and his beautiful six-year-old son linger only to see her buried and then depart with the remains of the Brethren – those who have survived the ambush. With them is a new member, a silent young man with wary, intelligent eyes – the Allonsanfan of the title. He is the son of their former leader Philippe and, we soon discover, made of sterner stuff than his somewhat quixotic co-subversives.

Fulvio tells Tito he will organize an arms deal with the funds entrusted him by Charlotte, and agrees a rendezvous. In fact, he plans to sail to America with Massimiliano. This encounter has taken place at the edge of the cemetery, in a rectangle of foundations. Later, the visual metaphor of foundation stones recurs, in another crucial meeting of the Brethren, to suggest the preliminary nature of the great revolutionary task.

Left alone at last with Massimiliano, Fulvio dines his son in grand manner at a hotel, commandeering a violin from a busker and bursting into a virtuoso solo which leaves the house musicians winded. Fulvio, celebrating his reunion with his son, seems fully alive for once.

As Fulvio carries his son to bed, Massimiliano asks what 'mon amour' means. Fulvio explains. 'Mon amour,' sighs the child, snuggling against him. Fulvio walks to the bedroom window, caught in a strange fullness of emotion. Later that night, however, we see the darker aspect of this love he feels for his son. When the child wakes, sweating in a nightmare and wanting to go home to his foster-parents, Fulvio panics. He falls back on duplicity. This scene is one of the most powerfully rendered in the film. To keep the child in the room he warns him that there is a monstrous toad outside the door. To increase the sinister atmosphere he covers the nightlight in a chiffon scarf, bathing the room in a bizarre green light. When the child, after a mighty internal struggle, resists the idea, Fulvio tightens the screw. He takes away the light and tells Massimiliano that he is right, there is no toad outside the door, the toad is here, on the bed, and has just eaten Fulvio. Only a kiss from a child will bring father back to life. The child succumbs. As he walks to the bed we feel the impact of the trauma, and the film achieves a tragic dimension. Has Fulvio, then, won? There is a knock at the door; as it swings open, a giant toad squats on the threshold, in Fulvio's brief hallucination, before a hotel servant enters.

The toad scene, which breaks Massimiliano's will, commits Fulvio to a course of treachery and murder from which there can be no return, as for Macbeth following the murder of Duncan. On a lake he waits with another Brother, Lionello, for gunrunners who do not arrive because they do not

exist. On the bank waits a girl, Francesca, who has been enlisted into the movement and who is infatuated with Fulvio. In her innocence, she sees him as a hero. Lionello becomes agitated. Of all the tender-hearts among the Brethren he is the most neurotic. Fulvio proposes gently that they should kill themselves; there is no other way to end in honour. Lionello allows himself to be weighted down with stones and stands on the gunwale. Suddenly he hurls himself back into the boat, declaring that he has understood. Fulvio is testing his nerve to see how strong his revolutionary zeal is. In his excitement he rocks the boat and tips out. Fulvio watches Lionello drown. Francesca runs along the bank, horrified by the scene she has witnessed.

Fulvio lets himself be 'rescued' by a boatload of merry-makers bound for a carnival. The second boat, a deliberate echo of the motif used at the end of *San Michele Aveva un Gallo*, suggests the degree of distance the Taviani have achieved from their earlier, more solemnly rendered films, for this scene is rendered in the burlesque idiom. In a tavern bedroom Francesca confronts Fulvio, accusing him of letting Lionello drown. Once again Fulvio's manipulative sense is alerted. How can he bring the girl round?

'Yes, I did it,' he begins, 'I let my friend die. Now, if you've got the guts, try to compare his love to mine for you ...' And so, once again, an innocent is snared in the cobweb of false emotion Fulvio weaves so adeptly. For Francesca is hearing what she most wants to hear, that Fulvio murdered a man for love of her, and yet she also senses dimly that what he is telling her is intolerable. 'I hate you,' she says. Fulvio knows he has won her over, 'You won't always be beautiful,' he tells her softly. 'You'll be in gaol for being a revolutionary. You'll be old and childless.'

'If only I could read your mind,' she says. Later that night she takes a willing youth from the carnival into her bed. Having surrendered (sullied) herself, she is Fulvio's. 'What would you like me to do?' she asks him, kneeling naked before him. Later, while she sleeps, he watches her, and this shot dissolves into another very similar composition, catching the Janus-aspect of Fulvio's character. But he has gained an empty victory over Francesca, as over Massimiliano. During the night, his unconscious mind tells him as much; he has another hallucination, in which Lionello surfaces from the waters of the lake, pale and Shelley-like, to reproach him. Fulvio tries to rebut the image. 'Idiot. You died because you couldn't swim.' Lionello replies, with a subtlety the dead man himself could hardly have mustered, 'You're too intelligent. You came too early or too late.'

Fulvio, rattled, decides to leave at once with Francesca. They will stop off at Geneva and travel from there to America. In bed, Francesca proposes a refinement to his plan to elude further commitment to the Brethren. She will shoot him in the leg, she says, doing so before he has time to argue.

The carnival scenes now become foreground material, as merry-makers burst in on the lovers and a large-bosomed lady daubs Fulvio with makeup. Francesca laughs at him for not being able to laugh at himself. Fulvio, like Clerici in *The Conformist*, is a man in whom natural instinct and zest has

been replaced by a continuous guardedness. This emerges more forcibly in the scene which occurs a little later, as the Brethren devise their Southern dance; again Fulvio cannot participate emotionally. The Brethren have turned up, not to meet Fulvio, who is no longer important to the project, but to incorporate a peasant rebel known as Vanni, who regales the rebels with the story of how he slaughtered several soldiers who had captured his cholera-stricken wife. She was dead when he got to her.

Cholera is rife in the South, Vanni briefs the Brethren; the people are starving; they have no resistance to the fever. His story moves Allonsanfan, who embraces a true brother in adversity, recognizing in Vanni a fanaticism which matches his own. Tito's plan is that the twenty remaining Brethren should sail with Vanni, using old guns, sporting their scarlet tunics.

The carnival carousers intrude at this moment. A woman is about to give birth, they scream, spreading her on the table. She extrudes a small toy dog, amid gales of laughter. The woman asks Tito why they are lurking in this barn. 'Trying out a new Southern dance,' says Tito. Led by the equally quick-witted Vanni, the Brethren extemporize their brutal 'saltarello', watched by Fulvio, his leg in bandages. Francesca announces that they must take Fulvio with them. Fulvio has passed out; he has no say in his destiny. 'The sea air will do his wound good,' one Brother says drily. So they take him along, as a kind of mascot.

On the boat Fulvio regains consciousness, believing for one exultant moment that he is bound for America. The reality of his situation enrages him. Tito calms him, telling the Brethren that he has been making too many of the decisions. Perhaps he pursues the revolutionary cause for egocentric reasons. For all that, he adds, in a world where almost everyone seems asleep, it is difficult to curb one's passion for violent change. Tito's introspection is interrupted when land is sighted. Allonsanfan is the first to don his tunic. As night falls, and the Brethren sing the *Internationale*, Fulvio interrogates Vanni concerning the peasants' reaction towards him in his home region. He learns that Vanni's nickname is 'Pesto' (Plague), thus isolating the potentially inflammable elements in the present situation which he can turn to his advantage.

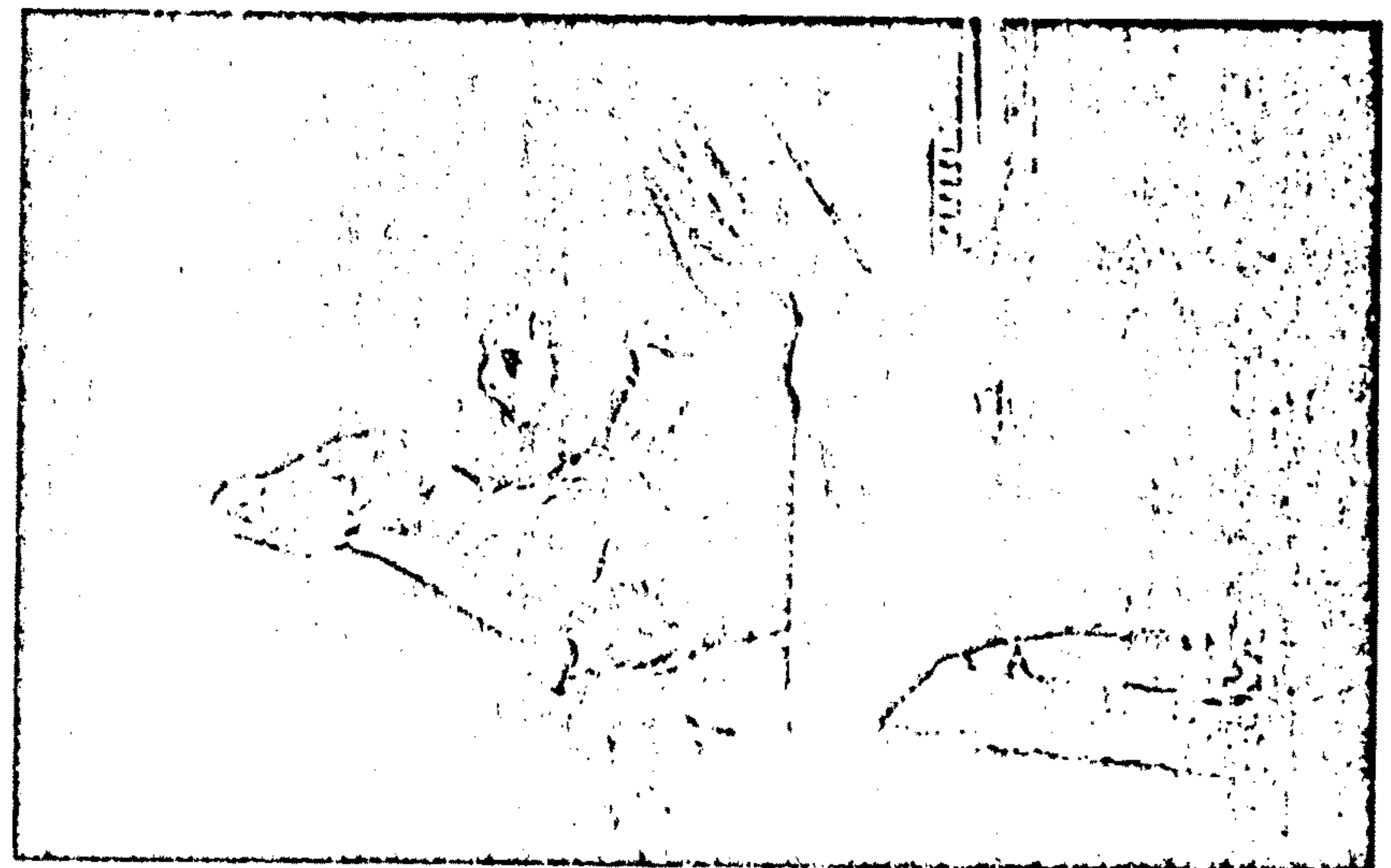
While the Brethren march inland crying, 'We are for the people,' and finding precious little response among the deserted fields, Fulvio slips off, to tip off the local priest that twenty armed men have landed on the island, along with Vanni Pesto. The linking of the rebels with the local 'monster' serves its purpose. The priest retorts glibly. Fulvio leaves the priest preaching a sermon which incites his 'sheep' to become wolves and tear the rebels to pieces.

Again, the Brethren have convened in the foundations of a church. Fulvio announces that he has spoken to local guerrilla leaders, who will join the cause and overthrow the tyrants. Fulvio's arrangement with the priest guarantees him physical protection once the massacre begins. He alone will be without the scarlet tunic. This ruse, however, contributes to his own death. As the

Brethren line up in the fields to greet the advancing horde of peasants Allonsanfan is the first to realize what is about to happen. The Brethren panic. Vanni fires the first shot, wounding a child. Tito then shoots Vanni, immediately running forward to embrace him. All but Allonsanfan are then clubbed and pitchforked to death. Allonsanfan, fleeing, catches up with Fulvio.

What follows is the most ironic scene in the film. Allonsanfan, whom one British reviewer dismissed as 'playing no significant part in the action', confronts Fulvio with a Judas stroke of his own. 'The peasants have joined our cause,' he announces jubilantly. 'They all joined hands and danced the *saltarello*. A little girl was laughing. Everyone clapped. They embraced one another.' Over Allonsanfan's peroration we see this vision of utopia enacted. Fulvio, who has everything to lose by accepting this story as reality, is finally deceived when Allonsanfan, in a master stroke, removes his red jacket and runs on. Fulvio dons the jacket. Soldiers appear. One fires, and kills him. Bells ring out across the land. The power of the status quo prevails. Yet Allonsanfan has escaped, in Fulvio's white shirt, to fight another battle. The revolution has been lost in deed but not in vision. Allonsanfan's utopian dream has been vindicated with the just execution of Fulvio, the revolution's betrayer.

In *Allonsanfan*, the Tavianis finally achieve the formal control within their cinema of 'utopian research' for which they have been striving in the cycle



Marcello Mastroianni in *Allonsanfan*

of political films which precede it. The film is a triumph of pure cinema, in which music, *mise en scène*, cinematography and a script of satisfying psychological density conjoin with considerable emotional and intellectual tension. Talking to Jean Gili in 1975, they commented, a shade wily, 'From a masochistic point of view, Fulvio is a part of ourselves. It seems to us today that in making this film we have liberated ourselves.' *Allonsanfan*, superseding the rhetorical tendencies of the earlier movies, incorporating within its essential structure the dilemma of the film-maker who, however much he wishes himself into a revolutionary role, is finally a member of the bourgeois intelligentsia, marks the moment in the Tavianis' career when they become able to dramatize their own contradictions. It is perhaps significant that only in *Allonsanfan* does the utopian vision hold intact, and the ending, while it is all too plausibly brutal in reality, remains emotionally optimistic. With their portrayal of Fulvio, a man in touch with his bad streak, they remind us of the value of the aphorism, 'The strength of vice is that it refuses to tolerate mediocrity.' The Tavianis' two most recent films, however, serve to consolidate the gains achieved in *Allonsanfan*, rather than transcend them.