

Document Citation

Title	[The spider's stratagem]
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Playboy</i>
Date	
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Strategia del ragno (The spider's stratagem), Bertolucci, Bernardo, 1970

P L A Y B O Y

Made for Italian television in 1969, before *The Conformist* and *Last Tango in Paris*, writer-director Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Spider's Stratagem*—though less polished than his later films—is engrossing, suspenseful and stunningly sensuous. Freely based on a short-short story by Jorge Luis Borges, *Stratagem* demonstrates Bertolucci's debt to his brilliant cinematographer Vitorrio Storaro. Visually, the movie projects breath-taking beauty as well as a mood of timeless mystery in a sunny, somnolent Italian village where a young man arrives to investigate the murder of his father—a local anti-Fascist hero assassinated some 30 years before in a box at the opera house during a performance of *Rigoletto*. The son (Giulio Brogi) discovers a monument in the piazza dedicated to poppa, yet the townspeople greet him with suspicion and hostility. His encounters with three anti-Fascist colleagues and his father's former mistress (pungently played by onetime screen siren Alida Valli) are the stuff from which *Stratagem* spins an offbeat political thriller—told mostly through flashbacks in which the son learns that his father was not a hero but a penitent traitor who contrived his own death in order to give the anti-Fascist cause a martyr. What began as a search for truth evolves into a philosophical study of consequences. Bertolucci's convoluted tale is rich in texture and characteristically provocative as an early work by one of world cinema's acknowledged young masters.