

FLASHBACK

by Valentina Nesci

THE FOURTH EUROPEAN PSYCHOANALYTIC FILM FESTIVAL INTERVIEW WITH DR. ANDREA SABBADINI

Have you ever dreamt of having the opportunity to look at your favourite movies and discuss them from a psychoanalytic perspective? Thanks to the *European Psychoanalytic Film Festival 4 (epff4)*, your dream can come true! This wonderful opportunity is made possible by the active participation of professionals from both the world of cinema and psychoanalysis to discuss movies that are screened at the congress. Anyone can take part in this experience, even without having any prior specific knowledge of the movies that are being discussed, and thereby throw himself/herself directly inside the realm of cinema and its “inner soul”. FLASHBACK considered this occasion a must-go-to event, and therefore flew to London to interview its creator, Dr. Andrea Sabbadini, an Italian psychoanalyst, member of the British Psychoanalytic Society.



Interview with Dr. Andrea Sabbadini

The European Psychoanalytic Film Festival has become a scientific and cultural event that cannot be missed by people who are interested in both Psychoanalysis and Cinema. Could you give us some insights as to why and how this fascinating event came to life?

In the 1990s I was offered the opportunity to run on behalf of the *British Psychoanalytic Society* a programme of events with film historian Peter Evans. This involved screenings of psychoanalytically interesting works on various themes (i.e. voyeurism; childhood; psychotic breakdown; brothers and sisters; eating disorders, etc) , followed by discussions between psychoanalysts and film-makers or cinema scholars. This programme is still continuing to date on a regular basis, on Sunday mornings at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London. On the back of the success of those events, the then President of our Society, Don Campbell, invited me to organize and chair a biennial film festival, where some of our work on the fascinatingly complex relationship between cinema and psychoanalysis could be concentrated in a few intensive days of screenings, panels, workshops and lectures. I set up an organizing committee in London and invited colleagues from various European countries to select and recommend important film from their regions to be shown at the festival. The first edition of *epff* took place in the prestigious rooms of BAFTA in London, in November 2001, with over 300 analysts, critics and film lovers attending from all over the world. Nanni Moretti was the first Italian director to come and discuss with us his then new *The Son's Room*, where of course he plays the part of... a psychoanalyst!

In November 2007, the Fourth European Psychoanalytic Film Festival will take place in its usual location. Do you think there is an evolutionary pattern in the structure of each new edition of the event?

More than an evolutionary pattern, I would say that we have learned from our early mistakes and are constantly improving various aspects of our programme. For instance, we now leave more time for discussion from the floor, we can afford to be more selective of the films we show, we have included some animation works and we invite films also from other European countries not represented before at *epff*. For instance, at *epff4* this November 2007 we are planning to show and discuss also movies from Belgium, Switzerland, Austria and Greece, while in the past most films were from the main film-producing countries, such as Italy, France and Germany.

The past programs of the EPFF had focused on different themes, such as “The inner and outer worlds of the filmmakers temporary social structure” (B. Bertolucci, F. Shaw, C. Mawson, 2001), “The uneasy identity in two generations of Italian film directors” (S. Bolognini, A. Battistini, 2003), and the psychological conflict of a man involved in a hit-and-run car accident (in the movie “Wolfsburg” by C. Petzold, 2005). On which themes will the 2007 EPFF revolve on?

Like in past editions, we do not have a clear-cut programmatic theme for the whole festival, but we allow, or indeed encourage, certain subjects to emerge in the course of the proceedings, around which several presentations then crystallize. This happened, for instance, in 2005 at our last *epff3*, when the theme of ‘loss’ could be identified in several films, panel discussions and lectures. These presentation, by the way, are now collected in *Projected Shadows. Psychoanalytic reflections on the representation of loss in European cinema*, a volume I have recently edited for Routledge.

As you know Borla just published the Italian version of your book “The Couch and the Silver Screen”. Do you think this will promote creative interactions between film makers, psychoanalysts, and cinema lovers in Italy?

I hope so! I must say, though, that several initiatives, some of them modelled on our own events in the UK, already exist in other parts of the world, including Italy. As well as screenings and psychoanalytic discussions of films in Padua, Rome, Naples and other cities, there are already several important publications (such as *La mente altrove. Cinema e sofferenza mentale*, edited by De Mari, Marchiori and Pavan; or the glossy film magazine *Eidos*) that are keeping the interest in this subject alive in our country. Last but not least, let me remind the workshop “Cinema e Sogni” and the television series “Doppio Sogno” (created in Rome by The International Institute for Psychoanalytic Research and Training of Health Professionals and RAISAT) as two interesting experiences that are very well known to the readers of your Journal. Of course, I am delighted about such developments as this field, I believe, can be a source of interdisciplinary cultural enrichment for professionals engaged in either psychoanalytic or cinema work, as well as of personal enjoyment for the general public.

Bernardo Bertolucci is the Honorary President of the EPFF from its very beginning. How did your friendship with him begin and how did it develop through the years?

Back in 1994 I wanted to screen a preview of *Little Buddha* for my psychoanalytic colleagues, and I dared inviting its director to discuss it with us. To my surprise, Bertolucci accepted and, having had several years before an unpleasant experience with psychoanalysts in Venice who had attacked his *Novecento*, he was pleased that in London we had welcomed him and his film much more warmly. We liked each other and have remained in regular friendly contact ever since. A few years later, he asked me to engage with him in a ‘conversation’ on psychoanalysis and cinema in front of a large audience in the *aula magna* of Vienna University, as part of the celebrations of Freud’s birthday, and we both particularly enjoyed that occasion. My colleagues and I were delighted when, in 2001, Bertolucci agreed to become the Honorary President of our first *epff*; he has remained in that position ever since, always attending and taking an active part in our Festivals. More recently, in 2005, we offered him the Honorary Fellowship of the *British Psychoanalytic Society* and in 2006 he gave a special presentation on *Cameras, keyholes and primal scenes* at our Institute, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Freud’s birth.