

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Themes in Antonioni's Films

Youth Culture

The Vanquished The common link between the separate episodes in this film is the youth culture that underlies them. As the prologue explains, these young people came of age during the war and the years immediately after. No wonder they have contempt for their parents, disdain responsibility and just want to live their lives as freely as possible. Their pointless crimes are all caused by their desperate desire to escape, to get out, go anywhere and find happiness. The cause of the murders cannot be found in social deprivation or broken homes, but rather in the warped minds of the characters themselves. They are the vanquished.

Zabriskie Point Shooting for this film began in 1968, at the height of the 1960's protest culture, which included the anti-Vietnam War movement, the Black Liberation movement and the pacifist Hippie movement. The film features all three of these cultural strands, with the two lead characters embodying the first and last. Whatever the limitations of the film, it cannot be faulted for its depiction of this critical moment in American cultural history. It is a memorable depiction of American youth culture at its zenith, including radical student politics, hippie love and a disdain for conventional values.